University of Alberta

Living "On The Land:" Teetl'it Gwich'in Perspectives on Continuities

by

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Abstract

This is a thesis about continuities. It results from field research focused on contemporary practices of natural resource use by Teetl'it Gwich'in living in and around the community of Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories. I describe and theorise about several layers of continuities as they are talked about and acted upon by elders living, as they say, "on the land." There have been multiple, continual attempts by outside agents to define, categorise, and, indeed, colonise the Gwich'in and their country according to external ideas in counterpoint to Gwich'in discussions about the proper relationship between people and the land. Gwich'in resistance not only points out the flaws in these foreign agendas but also makes use of a continuity in the Gwich'in ethos of living on the land: I have come to consider, following Bahktin, that Gwich'in activities and words be thought of as "tasting" of their social history. This history of continuity and resistance has been aptly commented on by the elder Thomas Koe as "that stuff—nothing new."

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Chapter One
Introduction: Luck and Method

From the summer of 1998 until the fall of 2001, I spent 13 months living with Teetl'it Gwich'in primarily while out "on the land," in all seasons. I have thus experienced the activities associated with a complete seasonal round. There are approximately 1100 Teetl'it Gwich'in, and 780 of them reside in and around the community of Fort McPherson, North West Territories. Fort McPherson was founded by the Hudson's Bay Company at a traditional Teetl'it Gwich'in gathering place on the east bank of the Peel River approximately 25 miles upriver from the Mackenzie Delta. It is a traditional gathering place because it is adjacent to both the delta country, where Gwich'in have used the abundant aquatic resources, and to the highland areas, where they have hunted their winter staple, caribou.

English, with varying degrees of fluency, is spoken by all Gwich'in with the younger generations using it almost exclusively. The use of Gwich'in by elders is certainly not homogeneous—depending primarily upon the individuals experience with the residential school system—and they themselves are quick to point out who speaks most fluently. Due to considerable effort within the community, the younger generations are now being exposed to more Gwich'in within the school system and it is hoped that this will aid in the revitalization of the language. The English that is spoken by Gwich'in demonstrates considerable borrowings from the aboriginal language. For example, the lexicon contains many Gwich'in words—especially for subjects related to ideas about animals and the land—and the English words that are used often index different concepts than those of use among other English speaker-hearers. I will be referring to many of these differences throughout this thesis.

Prior to setting out to do fieldwork with Teetl'it Gwich'in, I had been told by a few scholars from both the social and the physical sciences that I would need "good luck." They explained that the Gwich'in were difficult to work with and that it would be very hard to get at the things I wanted in order to create a thesis. Even after I had worked with Teetl'it Gwich'in for a couple of years I continued to receive these sorts of messages, indeed at a conference in Aberdeen, Scotland a scholar who works with an eastern Inuit group approached me and said, "you work with Gwich'in, I hear they are tough people to deal with." For the most part, this was not my experience, but the idea has intrigued me from the very start: why is it that some scholars would feel this way?

Near the end of my last field season, Thomas and Eileen Koe and I were sitting around the kitchen table one evening drinking tea and telling stories about what we had been doing, and stories about our families. This was a fairly common pastime during the long summer evenings and a good occasion for reflection. Eileen began to tell me about the job one of her sons had in the southern Northwest Territories on a major construction project. She told me that her kids had never really had to deal with "bad racism" before, but when her son first arrived at the camp he got his evening meal and tried to sit down with some Euro-Canadian workers. Upon sitting down all the other workers stood up, left the table and moved to new one. She said, "he learned right then that the guys didn't want to mix and he better just stick with the other native guys." She then said, "you know people have funny ideas about us." Thomas replied, "stuff is like that, some guys are good but most have funny ideas about Natives down here." "Half-cracked ideas,"[1] said Eileen. A good deal of laughter and some humorous stories from Thomas and Eileen's experiences dealing with people in the south and visitors to the north followed. Eileen

[1] Almost insane

told a favourite story about one "poor" fellow who thought he could spread the gospel by developing a rapport with the people because he kept many dogs and lived with them in a make-shift shelter stuck on the back of his truck.[2] With the subject having been broached about southern ideas regarding Gwich'in, I decided to tell them about the opinion that the Gwich'in were difficult to deal with, while being careful to point out that I did not share this idea. After a pause, Thomas said:

> Ahh, that stuff—nothing new, long time ago people called us the quarrelers, then they called us Loucheux, you know slanty-eyed,[3] only now are we called what we always say, Gwich'in, people living in this country. You know, Rob, we say "Teetl'it Gwich'in," people staying in the country around the middle river [Peel River]. That's the way we always say it to each other, but the other guys say different things, I don't know why.

Eileen then replied:

> Goodness, it's because we say what we think about them. So long people have been coming here with their own ideas and trying to change things, change us so that we would become like them, well we just say what we think about that. How many negative things have people said about us. I don't know how many times the World has heard strange things about us. Now some of our elders have to travel and tell people about our ways and that we don't suffer animals.[4] I don't know if they listen though, it's really hard because they have never lived with us; all they have to go on is what they have heard from their people. You know, we read all that stuff, so much is negative, how it is with all the positive stuff people do here nobody talks about that, our own stories are full of positive stuff and our newsletter in the community is full of good feelings. But when people come with these ideas of how to help us or to tell others negative things about us, with bad ways of doing things, we say what we know.

---

[2] Many Gwich'in still keep sled dogs and dogs are a subject of a great deal of conversation; however, the idea of living with them is abhorrent.

[3] While saying this Thomas half closed his eyes and pretended to look about furtively, as if hiding something.

[4] Eileen is referring to delegations that traveled widely throughout North America and Europe in support of maintaining trapping lifeways. The biggest problem the elders found was convincing others that they did not engage in cruel practices. To "suffer animals" is considered to be a breach in ethical practice and a breakdown of proper human-animal relationships by Gwich'in standards.

I replied, "Oh ya, all of that stuff is true. But there are some people who go back and read that stuff now and study why those guys said those things, you know study those guys instead."[5] "Hmm, right on! It's like that for all the Natives, I guess," said Eileen. Thomas then said:

> You know when you and Ara first came with Dave[6] a few years back we didn't know you guys. You told us about the projects that you guys wanted to do but you never told us how to teach you guys. Most of you bring lots of questions and stuff like that. So we taught you our way, brought you out on the land with us and did all those good things together. You guys just wanted to help do that stuff so we wanted to help you guys too. You know at first you did some funny stuff, that's why we have Rob Point[7] [mutual laughter] but you learned fast and now can do most of that stuff right. We are proud of you guys and we really miss you guys when you leave. Last time you left, we didn't want to get up to say goodbye.

The above conversation has been my driving force and my organizing idea for writing this thesis, and it seems right that the direction came from the two elders I spent the most time with and who invested the most amount of energy into my instruction. I was in Teetl'it Gwich'in country on and off over a period of four years. Ostensibly, I was there to learn about Gwich'in hunting, trapping, fishing, and forestry practices and many of the things I learned about these practices are documented in this thesis. However, one

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[5] This new sort of academic reflection in anthropology is well evidenced by a recent conference on "Historicizing Canadian Sociocultural Anthropology" held February 20-23, 2003 at Trent University organized by Julia Harrison and Regna Darnell.

[6] David Anderson introduced us, and, to a large degree, set us up with Thomas and Eileen.

[7] "Rob Point" is a place where Dry River meets the Peel. Often referred to as "The Forks," it is part of Thomas' country and he has renamed it Rob Point because it is at that place that I made my most serious blunder. It was early on during my first field season and we were hunting moose. Fresh tracks could be seen on the bank and Thomas thought that maybe some of us could chase the moose out of the brush and back towards the Peel where he would be waiting. Eileen pointed to a tree that lay across the bank perpendicular to the river. Thomas stopped the boat by this tree that was, obvious to everyone but me, a good way of traversing the dangerous mud on the bank of the river. I knew that sometimes the mud could be a little deep, but by jumping six or seven feet up the bank one could avoid getting one's feet wet. I did this here and landed chest deep in "sticky mud," a slurry of silt and water akin to quick sand. This situation would have proved fatal had people not been there to pull me out with a rope. Thomas later explained that in some places in the delta, such as this backwater, the bank never really dries out and the mud is dangerous. One of the things children learn early is how to read the banks of the river. I had never had this opportunity, although after this experience I learned fast. Thomas renamed the point after this story both because it is humorous and because it always reminds me and his grandchildren to watch what we do and listen to instructions.

component that remained stubbornly central throughout my learning was that which I have in various reports (1998a, 1998b, 1999) referred to as "local concerns." These concerns, as presented in this thesis, range from the recognition that climate and pollution are beginning to have a disastrous effect on the land, the animals, the trees, the fish, and, indeed, the people, to the more subtle, but just as powerful effects that two centuries of colonialism have had on the way the Gwich'in have been defined and "managed" in accordance with all of the "ideas," many of them felt by Gwich'in to be "negative," that other people have brought to this country. Also represented are some of the various ways that the Gwich'in I know have resisted these ideas while continuing to practice what they consider to be their tradition of "living on the land."

It is particularly apt that my term of fieldwork ended with a similar message to that which I received when I arrived. The person whom I met on my arrival in Fort McPherson and the first person I spoke to about doing work in this community was Charlie Snowshoe. Charlie pointed out that perhaps it would be better if I studied the traditions of all of the people who have come to his country, rather than just that of the Gwich'in, but also said that I should go out on the land and learn from elders as well. At the time I really did not know what he was talking about, and felt that I had been given two, almost contradictory pieces of advice. After sitting at the table with Thomas and Eileen, and having been on the land with them and others, and having heard all the stories of interactions between the Gwich'in and those who came to their country with their own ideas, the good advice of Charlie Snowshoe came back and, finally, made a great deal of sense to me.

In The White Arctic (Paine (ed.) 1977) the various authors took it upon themselves to investigate the relationship that Inuit have had with various colonial agents over the period of contact. The impetus for this book came not only from an academic interest in colonial relations but also from direction given by the Inuit that what needs to be studied are the people who come to live with them. Following similar instruction of my Gwich'in teachers, I set out to investigate not only the practices of living on the land but how these fit into a discourse that Gwich'in have about how these practices are set historically within colonial relationships and, furthermore, how according to their reasoning these colonial relationships continue today in the manner in which people study things and set policy within their "country." In so doing, I not only describe the history of some colonial actions within Gwich'in country, and how the people have been continually over-defined by these actions, but also discuss an identity of resistance to these actions and furthermore an underlying identity which the people self-recognize as being continuous and directly related to an ethos about living or staying "on the land."

Learning about these various aspects of identity did not come easily. Like most raised in the tradition of Western Science I was continually asking myself about what sort of methodological tools I could bring with me to make field work easier or more productive. I did try a few different techniques that were suggested to me in academic circles, but these tended to be met with limited success in the field and criticism from elders. At one point I suggested that we set up some "formal" interviews and Eileen told me: "goodness, why would you do that when you were doing it right to begin with. People are tired of that stuff." Direction such as Eileen's came from the elders I learned

from, but it also came from a certain segment of what I consider to be my tradition in anthropology.

Many of the scholars who do research with First Nations communities have expressed a degree of frustration when it comes to describing their methodologies to those outside of their circle. I have heard these methods described at conferences as "hanging out" and being there, listening and then "to think about it a lot" (Preston 1999: 156) by senior anthropologists. Often a scholar who has no problem teaching seminars on anthropological methods encounters difficulties in describing his own actions when in the field. In actuality, "hanging out" means a great deal to those who have experienced this type of fieldwork. What it means is that one allows oneself the latitude to actively attend to the discourse, and this seems especially relevant when talking about subjects related to landscape, such as the relationships people have with land and animals. Basso (1990, 1996) and Cruikshank (1990a; 1990b) are clear on their position that anthropologists should be prepared to listen to the Native teachers who are willing to talk to us about their landscapes in their own way so that we may come to a better understanding of how our teachers, rather than ourselves, construct the World. For example, by allowing his teacher to instruct him in a way that the teacher felt was appropriate, Basso (1990: 138-173) was able to learn that among the western Apache the landscape is not glossed by the opposition between people and nature; but rather it is catalogued through stories of the interactions between people and the land. Thus, it is not only that anthropologists must keep their ears open but also that they must allow a good deal of latitude within their methodologies so that their teachers will be able to tell what they know through a process that makes sense to them. I have tried to attend to this methodological underpinning

throughout my work with the Gwich'in and it certainly helped to have elders such as Thomas and Eileen to remind me what I was doing was "doing it right" as long as I attended to the way the people were actually talking about the landscape. Hallowell notes that among the Ojibwa of Manitoba:

> ...it is not only the direct experience of the terrain that assists the individual in building up his spatial world; language crystallises this knowledge...
>
> [Hallowell 1955: 193]

To fully understand the relationship between people and the land, the land needs to be there as much as the stories do; it is an interactional process whereby the people talk about their lives on the land by recounting their personal experience in relation to landmarks, as I found out for myself with regard to "Rob Point."

Julie Cruikshank (1990a: 25), during the process of documenting life stories of First Nations women in the southern Yukon, observes that the women would often relate their stories to the land. Such an observation became even more obvious to her when travelling with Native people through their landscapes along the Alaska Highway. The narratives are focused on features or locations along the route which are coupled with stories that include both names and events and connect people to the land in a manner which allows for the past to mark the present. In Gwich'in country, I was often reminded of Cruikshank as I drove with people along the Dempster highway or boated up and down the Peel and Mackenzie Rivers while listening to the stories of what happened at various places along the route.

One of the concerns of Gwich'in elders is that outsiders keep asking them the same questions repeatedly. They complain that people are not really listening to their

answers or that people are asking too many of the wrong questions at the wrong time. Usually what happens in such cases is that elders tell people that nobody wants to go out on the land anymore. I understand such statements about culture loss as being directed at the interviewers for asking questions which should be answered on the land, be it taking part in activities such as hunting or fishing, or while listening to the stories people tell while relaxing from a day of shared work. Interviewing in a manner divorced from these activities is a chore for the people, as they prefer a process of showing and telling on the land (Wishart 1998b: 8).

In "A Coyote Columbus Story," Thomas King (1993) sets up a dialogue concerning the knowledge learned in books and that, which is learned by experience and story. The narrator points out that there is a problem with the story learned through the history books. This problem is the acceptance of the Colonial version of the story with an emphasis on written records as the truth. In his critique of the ways in which knowledge gets transmitted, he considers the incommensurability of the written historical tradition of Europe and the oral narrative pedagogy of First Nations. As it is pointed out at the end of the story, First Nations communities do not need their history written for them, they need their traditions about passing on knowledge to be respected. Part of this respect comes from realising the importance of narratives as pedagogical devices.

History, as identified as an objective study within Western thought would seem to fall into the category of learning from books. However, history is a form of communication which relies upon the internalisation of meanings in the process of identity creation even if it does profess to be authoritative: words as contextualized in semantic codes are historically emergent. Bakhtin (1981:293) points out that in novels

"each word tastes" of its social, historic context and it is the reader who must interact with these words and either internalise them or reject their context. I would argue that while it is true that words are historically emergent in their social meanings what is also true is that communicative norms have a great deal to do with whether the content of a text or a narrative will be shared or not.

Histories are dependent upon cultural conventions of coherence to make their message meaningful and instructive. Linde (1993:12) discusses how coherence is dependant upon a minimum of two relations. First is the fact that the words, phrases and sentences are in proper relation to each other. Second, the text as a whole must be of a recognisable form or type. In other words content and process must be recognised as being in proper order for the speaker and hearer to both make sense out of a text. Therefore coherence is a co-operative achievement:

> The speaker works to construct a text whose coherence can be appreciated, and at the same time the addressee works to reach some understanding of it as a coherent text and to communicate that understanding.
>
> [Linde 1993:12]

Thus she argues that her primary subject, life stories, are shaped not only by the teller but also by who the audience is, such that a teller will negotiate aspects of a story to fit with the audience and indeed when we are talking about stories of actions out on the land, the audience becomes far more than just the people present. Once one has become immersed through the various shared activities on the land, it suddenly becomes apparent that there may be others listening to the talk.

For myself this aspect of communication became apparent when Thomas and I were hunting during the spring of 1999. I had heard many stories about how animals

needed to be treated with respect, a respect that not only comes from one's physical actions, but also from the words one uses to maintain a proper relationship with the animals and the land. We had been concentrating on hunting for many days and it occupied my mind fully, then when we were walking through the bush an uncomfortable realisation came to me that perhaps something was also hunting us. Later that night I talked to Thomas about this fear and he said, "hmmm, that's how it is, why you have to be careful with what you say, same as us."

Some scholars have taken the argument about local communicative aspects further to look at shared communicative patterns across culture areas. Regna Darnell (1988:15) points out that there is a level at which Native North American hunting groups interact in patterns which are comprehensible across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Her insistence that those who do fieldwork with these peoples are able to finish one another's stories is a particularly powerful metaphor for this phenomenon. The story of my realisation that the land itself is listening is certainly not unique to anthropologists working with northern hunters. When I discussed it with colleagues over the last few years, they nodded and shared similar stories with me about their experiences doing fieldwork. It seems to be a common crystallisation of understanding arising out of the stories we hear while in the field and relate generally to a larger shared pedagogical process of hearing stories and relating them to present actions.

Robin Ridington has stated that:

> The oral traditions of many First Nations code information in a way that is analogous to the distribution of visual information in a holographic image. Each story, like each piece of a hologram, contains information about the entire structure of which it is a part. Stories function as metonyms; parts that stand for wholes.
>
> [Ridington 1999: 19]

In other words, stories are metonyms of larger epistemologies and lifeways that use metaphors to construct and order understandings about the world and to pass on this knowledge to active listeners. Cruikshank further argues that:

> ...[Native Canadian] oral testimonies are more than just the spontaneous product of an encounter between an interviewer and a subject: the narrative has symbolic qualities - a kind of autonomous life that simultaneously reflects continuity with the past and passes on experiences, stories, and guiding principals in the present.
>
> [Cruikshank 1990a: x]

Stories told by knowledgeable people are meant to be open ended so that they can be "parked in memory, available for leisurely reflection in relation to ensuing life experience" (Darnell 1990:270). While the terrifying notion that something may indeed be hunting you cannot be said to be leisurely, the process is the same. In this way, stories work more as guiding principles than as direct messages. Darnell (ibid) argues that this is due to an ethos that dictates that it would be disrespectful to assume what the actual life experience of the listener will be. Thomas was certainly happy that I made the connection between the stories he had told me about the outcome of improper actions and words and my actions while in the bush, but he would not have told me directly to watch what I say while we were hunting.

Robin Ridington (1990:xiv) in struggling to write Dunne-za stories in a language which makes sense to anthropology is careful to note that knowledge is not just a thing which can be catalogued or indexed; knowledge is both a process and a content: "To the Dunne-za, as to the scholars within the tradition of Western Phenomenology, how a person knows something is as important as what he or she knows." Ridington discusses

how his work is a "braiding of many texts and voices" which is then made available to the reader to internalise in relation to their own experience.

Walter Lightning discusses how the pedagogy of Cree elders is an unfolding of ever-increasingly complex metaphors:

> The stories were structured in such a way that each story's meaning got more and more complex and rich as I thought about it. The elder knew that I was not ready to understand the deeper systems of meaning and could not take it all at once, so he constructed the story so that it's meaning would continue to unfold. It was not just the individual stories that did this, but the stories were all structurally related to each other, even though I did not realise that when each one was told.
>
> [Lightning 1992: 100]

The implication of metaphor and story as used by Lightning is that it is dialogic. Metaphors can only unfold when there is an effort made by both the speaker and the hearer to tell and then unfold the meaning in relation to new semantic domains. In this way coherence is achieved through the application of knowledge to both the speaker's and the hearer's personal system of verification. Ruth Behar (1995:152) in what is perhaps an overgeneralization, points out that Europeans value information "shot through with explanation" and summarization while members of oral cultures value the practice of story telling in which the listener will evaluate and re-evaluate the information adding personal experience to become the storyteller. As with Lightning, her implication is that stories are dialogic requiring an active speaker and hearer.

As Cruikshank (1990a) demonstrates by recording the life stories of a few elder women, stories about the past are more than just that particular person's experiences or a recording of their words; they are also a recording of a culture's means of expression and of an underlying message of what it is to live well.

As I have recorded elsewhere (Wishart 1998b), many elders I have worked with expect to be paid for their time when they are put into the foreign context of an interview. When one accompanies them onto the land, however, and tries to learn by their standards, one learns a great deal more and one is also respected. I note:

> I believe that one should be careful to examine what the difference is between the frustration with researchers in the formal office sense and the marked openness of learning by "living the culture."[8] Even [the president of the RRC] who has stressed the importance of paying elders the most and who has demonstrated the most concern about people getting "ripped off" changes his tone with me when he is at Eight Miles visiting his sister's fish camp. Here he talks openly, telling me stories and sharing his knowledge about the land and the animals without hesitation. In some way I feel that this place is friendly in regards to knowledge because here people are living the knowledge staying on the land and eating wild foods on a daily basis. Here knowledge surrounds you in the daily activities of the people procuring food for themselves and for those who rely on them to some degree. Here knowledge cannot be abstractly thought of[9], here knowledge is in the doing and in the stories that are told about it. Here when I paid [the elders] for taking me up the Peel River and teaching about the places and their history, they took the money and spent it on gas for another trip where we can live and work at getting more to eat and at the same time teach me more things.
>
> [Wishart1998b: 20]

When I first went to the field in Fort McPherson, I took the baggage of academic theorizing about narratives and metaphors and unfolding processes with me, but I took previous experience as well. My Master of Arts research involved working with Ojibwe and Pottawatomi hunters from the community of Walpole Island in South Western Ontario and while this experience was brief compared to all the time I spent with

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[8]This phrase was used by one elder who was visiting her sister at Eight Miles one day when we had been invited over for dinner. She was intrigued by the idea of a white guy staying at this place and learning by listening and doing rather than by interviewing in a formal manner.

[9]Which is not to say that the knowledge is not symbolic in content and abstract in meaning; rather, that it is applied to situations on the ground level.

Gwich'in, it did prepare me in some valuable ways. I had already learned something of how to listen and pay attention to what was being said while participating in activities on the land.[10] The experience also gave me my first understandings of how identities can be maintained and re-constructed in spite of what many would argue are overwhelming colonial forces (Wishart 1996). I also gained valuable insight during my Master of Arts work and again during the preliminary phase of my fieldwork in Gwich'in country to pay attention to all of what was being said, even if it seemed off topic in regards to what was being studied at the time. I have found that there are often subtle—and not so subtle—messages related to larger systems and meanings that may not seem at the time related. However these messages often come back to haunt—and in one case straighten the hair on the back of the neck while wondering if something is tracking me—and to become extremely valuable. The following example should further serve to demonstrate what I mean. During the early summer of 1999, Thomas Koe, his son Andrew, Ara Murray and I took a trip up the Peel so that Thomas could show us the sorts of places where people harvest large building logs. During the trip we had noticed that the water in many places was covered with oil, and this concerned Thomas considerably. On the way back to town we went far up Three Cabin Creek and Andrew shot a beaver. Everybody was happy because this meant fresh meat after eating fish for the last week, so we set camp and got ready to cook the beaver. However, when Andrew began to skin the animal he cried out for us to come. Around the muscles of the neck were many sacs of what they called "puss." I was pretty sure these were tumours infecting the glands. Needless to say we did not eat the beaver and Thomas promptly disposed of the carcass. When he came back he was angry. He said, "when you write about the forest, tell them about this: That beaver he

[10]I suppose it is apt that I entitled my Master of Arts Thesis "When New Experiences Come To Be..."

eats the willows growing out of this water and he lives in it. Make sure they understand what's going on here." To Thomas, the sick beaver and the oil are both parts of the same problem with southern intrusions into his country and while it was not directly related to the forests *per se*, in his mind and in the way he now tells the story about running into a sick beaver, one "that wanted to die[11] to show us," it is all part of the same body of intrusions that he and his people have had to fight and resist while continuing their practice of living on the land.

What follows, then, is a thesis dedicated to looking at all the connections that exist between the ways that Gwich'in have been defined by outside agents; the colonial actions of these agents in relation to activities on the land; the multiple ways that Gwich'in have in past and continue to resist these various forces; and finally the "positive things" which Gwich'in do on the land, and how these activities are related through a discourse on continuity and proper relationships. In Chapter One, I set out to explore how the Gwich'in have been defined in anthropological and related literature. In so doing, I uncover the rather pejorative place Gwich'in and other Dene groups found themselves in debates over the evolution of social structure. In Chapter Two, I further investigate how Gwich'in and other hunter-gatherers have been over-defined by anthropologists and others in accordance with the structure of their economies. I present a counter construction from a Gwich'in perspective and begin to set out aspects of their history that remain continuous, despite the assimilative efforts of the introduction of wage economies and the like. In Chapter Three, I return to an investigation of the late 19th century with regard to the management of wildlife in this area. I argue that colonial managers have

[11] Gwich'in believe that sometimes animals that are sick or starving will seek out hunters so that they can end their suffering.

engaged in an attempt to colonize Gwich'in country, and to alter the lifeways of the people in accordance with faulty ideas of social evolution and economic development. In Chapter Four, I describe the many ways that Gwich'in have dealt with colonial attempts to "manage" them, and some of the ways that they continue to resist wildlife management policy, as they understand it as being part of the same colonial enterprise. In Chapter Five, I return to the idea of resistance and describe, using the illustration of forestry activities, the manner in which people may resist simply by doing what they always have done. I argue that resistance and continuity sometimes become one and the same. In Chapter Six, I explore how aspects of continuity are expressed through discourse on the land, and why audience becomes paramount in the exploration of what these messages really mean.

I have not included a separate literature review section in this thesis, but have instead tried to incorporate what I learned from academic sources into my narrative about what I learned in the field. I did this because I have tried to bring forth the ideas that I was working from while in the field, ideas that have come to me from both academic sources and the words of the elders. Literature reviews can thus be found throughout the thesis, but for the ease of the reader, I will make these evident through a brief listing here. A literature review of past ethnographic work on the Gwich'in and theorizing about the implications of ideas about social structure can be found throughout Chapter Two, from pages 19-46, and in Chapter Three from page 47-51. A literature review of the relationship between colonialism and wildlife management can be found in Chapter Four from pages 87-103 and 117-121. A review of literature dedicated to resistance of management schemes can be found in Chapter Five from pages 122-130. A review of

landscape and place can be found in Chapter Six from pages 162-169. Finally, a review of audience can be found throughout Chapter Seven.

Chapter Two
Past Ethnographic Work: Synonymy, Bands and Tribes.

Over the five years that I have been researching about and working with Gwich'in groups I have been asked by many people to explain just who the Gwich'in are. This is always difficult to answer, because I must make a complex assessment of what is actually being asked of me. I have had this question asked of me by Gwich'in elders and youth who are interested in testing my knowledge of their history against their understandings; I have been asked by southern academics who want to classify the Gwich'in with reference to linguistic, material or cultural categories; and I have been asked by southern non-academics who have heard of terms such as Inuit and Dene applied to people living in the north but have never heard of the Gwich'in. What is common to all three of these groups is confusion over categories like bands and tribes and the name of the people. One young Teetl'it Gwich'in from Fort McPherson asked: "You know we used to be called Loucheux Band #7 now we are called Teetl'it Gwich'in, how come?" An editor of the Oxford Companion Encyclopedia of Canadian History asked me if the Gwich'in are different from the members of the Loucheux Band that his sister had met in Fort McPherson in the 1970's. I have also been asked on many occasions whether Gwich'in is a language or a tribe. Furthermore, Thomas Koe's explanation about why the Gwich'in are perceived by some to be difficult to work with began with the fundamental assertion that it is because so many people have referred to them in different ways over the history of contact. While confusion about these issues is a constant in these exchanges, such discussions do, however, foster an increased understanding of how the Gwich'in have been described in past ethnographic works and how classifications such as "tribes" and "bands" and other current ethnonyms have come to be taken up or discarded.

Much of the literature in the past concerning the Gwich'in has been written in an attempt to try to define exactly who the Gwich'in are in relation to an ever shifting body of categories imposed by academic and popular sources originating outside of the local territory. In order to come to a better understanding of this historical process it is necessary to trace not only the shifts in nomenclature and categories but also what the goals of the various authors have been and the sort of pre-existing understandings that they were working from.

Cornelius Osgood and His Predecessors:

Cornelius Osgood's Contributions to the Ethnography of the Kutchin is considered by many scholars who work with Gwich'in to be the definitive source for information on the "aboriginal Kutchin" (.cf. Krech 1974:10). Osgood (1970, orig. 1936) documents the ethnological data he collected while spending the summer of 1932 travelling downstream on the Yukon River. Osgood's main argument sharing thrust of purpose with many of the Boasians[12] of the time working with Aboriginal peoples was that the Gwich'in were in danger of disappearing as a recognisably distinct culture. His mission was to collect as much information as possible from the older members of several Gwich'in groups so that he could reconstruct through the process of comparing the different responses from each group what the culture was like prior to European influence. He locates this mission within the broader context of trying to determine what "prehistoric" cultures were like by "the tying of a few broken threads spun from the memories of a few old men with the hope that in the future the design may be restored with some semblance of original fullness" (ibid: 22).

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[12] Osgood was a student of Edward Sapir. Sapir along with Leslie Spier co-edited the Yale University Publications in Anthropology that published Osgood's monograph in 1936.

While Osgood argues that he is tying together threads of memory, his work is also dependant upon two previously written bodies of research. The first was the collection of stories compiled by Edward Sapir, who had relied on John Fredson, a "Chandalar Kutchin," to recite and translate the stories (Osgood 1970: 3). The second was a previous, fairly extensive literature written by fur traders, explorers, missionaries, and travellers. While the full extent of the literature available by the time of Osgood's ethnography is too lengthy to mention here, I will document some of the important works[13] that were written about the Gwich'in.

In 1789 the Northwest Company sent Alexander Mackenzie in search of a northern river route to the Pacific Ocean. Upon entering the headwaters of the river that now bears his name he was enthusiastic until the river began to swerve from its western orientation to the north. Despite his disappointment, he continued his exploration to find that the river does indeed enter an ocean, just the wrong one. Regardless of his failure in his primary mission, he made some sketchy notes about the people he encounters along the way during the summer months including people that his southern Dene guides called "Deguthee Dinees," which he translated as the "Quarrelers" (Mackenzie 1789-1793:46). His observations are primarily related to the diet (ibid: 68) and to the beliefs about these neighboring peoples (ibid: 73). However he does note that at this point Gwich'in were already trapping beaver and marten because "the French people are fond of their skins" (ibid: 81) and were therefore engaged in the fur trade with other Dene middlemen who labeled them according to their trading and combat prowess which later got mistranslated as "Quarrelers." This mistranslation may be the origin of the notion that Gwich'in are

[13] I use the term "important works" to designate those works which are in some way seminal to later literature. From a perspective of content some of these works may indeed seem shallow but are nonetheless important in a tracing of the literature.

difficult to work with. Mackenzie's map labels the country surrounding the Mackenzie River simply as "Quarrelers."

The next person to make any notes regarding the Gwich'in was Sir John Franklin who was assigned to be Captain and Commander of an over-land expedition to explore the shores of the western area of the "polar sea" by The Earl Bathhurst, K.G., Lord President of His Majesty's council. Franklin spent the years 1825-1827 traveling through the western British Arctic, sending an envoy led by Sir John Richardson to lands east of the Coppermine River. Both of these explorers wrote journals that were available through the archives of Canada by Osgood's time, and have since been compiled into a book with copies of the sketches and the maps made by these two exploratory teams (Franklin 1971). It was at Fort Good Hope that Franklin and Richardson met many of their informants. On the 25 of August 1825, Franklin discusses the ethnonym "Deguthée Dennes," arguing that Mackenzie's translation "Quarrelers" is an improper one. He further recommends that the trader's term, "Loucheux," is a better translation of a term that means "the people who avoid the arrows of their enemies, by keeping a look out on both sides." "Loucheux" is derived from the French term used by the traders of the Northwest Company and meaning "slant eyed" or "squinty eyed." Even at this point in history the term "Loucheux" is being debated for its pejorative connotations, but Franklin assures us through his journal that the name merely tries to convey the sense of the name given to these people by their southern neighbors (Franklin 1971:23-24).

Sir John Richardson, a medical doctor and naturalist, left Franklin's expedition in July 1826 to map the eastern side of the Mackenzie Delta, along the coast to the mouth of the Coppermine River, and then up this river to the eastern shores of Great Bear Lake.

This expedition of Richardson's is occasionally cited for his knowledge of Gwich'in, but in the narrative of this expedition he says very little about the peoples he encounters other than to make observations regarding their place in social evolution which he considers to be very low (Richardson 1971: 196-197). His 1851 Arctic Searching Expedition is often cited for its contribution to Gwich'in ethnography, but as Burpee (1910:13, 57, 81, 90) points out in several of his notes, Richardson drew most of his descriptions about the Gwich'in from Alexander Hunter Murray. However, Richardson is the first to use the spelling "Kutchin" (1851: 214), a spelling which later came to be standard until very recently, and he is honest about his relative lack of first hand knowledge of these people:

> Of this people I have but little personal acquaintance, having had only brief interviews with the families that frequent the banks of the Mackenzie for a hundred and fifty miles or so above its delta. My information respecting them is derived from my friend Mr. Bell, who has traded with them for many years, and is the first European who penetrated into their country from the eastward; and from Mr. Murray, who is now, and has been for some seasons, resident among them. It is to this gentleman's very able letters, which I have had the advantage of pursuing, through the kindness of chief factor Murdoch M'Pherson, that I am indebted for descriptions of the tribes dwelling on the Yukon.
>
> [Richardson 1851: 378]

Alexander Hunter Murray was a fur trader who was sent in 1847 by the Hudson's Bay Company to establish better trade with the western Gwich'in, and, in so doing, drive the Russians out of business in the area around the Yukon River. From 1847-1848 he spent his time traveling extensively through Gwich'in country and establishing trade with the Gwich'in at Fort Yukon, which was constructed in Russian territory under his authority. His Journal of the Yukon was later edited and annotated by L. J. Burpee (1910). This work is probably the best and most thorough early description of the Gwich'in. It provides not only the descriptions of physical characteristics and material

culture typical of writings from that time, but also a brief vocabulary of Gwich'in words (1910:90-92), a treatise on the varying dialects (1910: 81-84) and the geographical knowledge of these peoples. His work also includes several sketches of Gwich'in individuals and activities that have been duplicated in almost all later works on the Gwich'in. It is also in his work that the term Gwich'in (spelled "Kootchin in his narrative) as opposed to Loucheux or other non-autonyms makes its first appearance in the literature (1910: 84). However, like many of his contemporaries, he refers to these people primarily by using the terms of the French traders, but he also goes to get lengths to find out what the people call themselves and records these Gwich'in ethnonyms in various places in his journal.

A brief description of Gwich'in appears in the notes of the missionary William W. Kir[k]by[14] (1865) who encountered these people while traveling in 1861 down the Mackenzie, up the Peel and then over the mountains to "Lapiene's [Lapierre's] House" (1865: 416-417). He uses the term "Loucheux" when referring to these people but he recognizes that they call themselves "Kutchin," which he translates as "the people" (1865: 418). He makes ethnological comparisons to other peoples, and he makes some notes on their economy (1865: 418-419) but he mostly he makes observations about their non-Christian practices, which he feels must be ended. He notes that since his return from this place he read "a glowing picture of savage life" (1865: 419) but fails to comprehend how anyone could come to such a conclusion. He does not mention the name or the author of this piece but one wonders if it is not that of Alexander Hunter Murray, whose

[14] "Kirby" is the spelling that the Smithsonian used for this work. Slobodin (1981), Krech (1974), and Mishler (1990) spell it as "Kirkby." The latter spelling is the one that he used in his own correspondence (1861). "Kirby" is therefore a typographical error on the part of the Smithsonian.

narrative and correspondence were available by the time of Richardson's Arctic Searching Expedition (1851).

Two contemporaries of Kirkby, and often-cited early figures in the ethnography of Gwich'in, are William Hardisty and Strachan Jones. These two writers of "proto-ethnography" (Slobodin 1981: 532) made available their observations as fur traders in Gwich'in country (Osgood 1970:18) to the Smithsonian Institution, which compiled and added these notes into a section of the 1866 annual report entitled: "Notes on the Tinneh or Chepewyan Indians of British and Russian America." Slobodin (1981: 532) points out that these works were "replying to or stimulated by a questionnaire from L.H. Morgan." Hardisty's contribution titled "The Loucheux Indians" was based on the time he spent primarily amongst the western Gwich'in of what is now Alaska (Greer 1996:65). In this piece he briefly describes the physical characteristics (1867:311), the various dialects (1867:311), social evolution (1867:311-12), social structure (1867:312), mythology (1867:314), religion (1867:316-19), dress and habitation (1867:320). Throughout the work he makes reference to these aspects as being related to the social evolutionary stage of barbarism.

Strachan Jones apparently spent several years during the mid-1800's trading in the central Yukon and in the lower Mackenzie (Greer 1996:65). His work focuses primarily upon material culture but he also describes (using incredibly negative and value laden language)[15] his observations on distribution of the "nation" (1867:320), government (1867:325), law (1867:325), and kinship terms (1867:326). He refers to the

[15] Jones proceeds in a negative, contradictory manner, i.e., he brings forth a subject such as regularized material exchange by telling the reader that the people have nothing of that sort of social organization and then proceeds to provide descriptions of such organizing features later in his work.

people as "Kutchin" throughout signaling a shift in the ethnonym of choice in academic writing.

In French there is a considerable amount of information on the Gwich'in written by the Oblate missionary Émile Petitot. Petitot made several journeys through the Mackenzie Valley and into that river's delta between the years 1866 and 1872. He makes an impressive contribution to the ethnography of the Gwich'in with the dictionary he wrote (1876) as well as a grammatical analysis of the varying dialects of Gwich'in, as well as a long list of terms with French and "Hare" equivalents. He refers to these people as "Dindjié" or as "Dènè Dindjié" (1886: 2) that he describes as the proper way of saying person (homme) within their language. His coupling of "Dènè" with "Dindjié" is seemingly repetitive but it reflects his linguistic acumen in arguing that the Gwich'in subscribe to a larger language family. Of equal importance to his dictionary are his collections of Gwich'in folklore (1886).

Another important contribution by a missionary is that of the Anglican Robert McDonald. McDonald took over responsibility for the conversion of the Gwich'in from William West Kirkby in 1862, and by 1866 McDonald was preaching in the "Tukudh" language at Fort Yukon (Peake 1975: 57). Following the sale of Alaska to the Americans in 1867, McDonald was forced to leave the territory of the American fur trading interests and eventually he settled in Fort McPherson in 1871 where he stayed until 1905 (Peake 1975: 59). McDonald, who became archdeacon during his stay in Fort McPherson, was an already accomplished translator of biblical texts by the time he came to Gwich'in country. His father was a Scot and his mother an Ojibwe from Manitoba, and he translated religious works into a dialect of Ojibwe during his early years of religious

service. While there is no overlap between Ojibwe (an Algonquian language) and Gwich'in, this experience was apparently helpful in teaching McDonald techniques of translation. His Tukudh bible (1886) is still in print. McDonald believed that the term "Tukudh" was the proper aboriginal word for the whole nation of Gwich'in and that "Kutchin" was an improper use of a part of local designations (1865: January 31). The term "Tukudh" comes from the term "Tā-küth-Kutchin" used by the people of the Upper Porcupine River to describe themselves (Goddard and Slobodin 1981: 531). Despite the fact that McDonald traveled throughout Gwich'in country, he maintained "Tukudh" as the preferred name for the language and the nation. McDonald's greatest contribution aside from his painstaking translation of the bible into Gwich'in (1886) was his grammar of "Tukudh" (1911)[16]. He also made numerous notes on ethnographic matters that are available in his diaries and his correspondence. Being a missionary he was particularly interested in the aboriginal religious beliefs of the Gwich'in and this is reflected in many of his descriptions (Peake 1975: 71). McDonald is not only well remembered in Gwich'in country, but also plays a key role in the outside academic definition of the Gwich'in as portrayed in the work of Lewis Henry Morgan.

During the mid 1800's Morgan set about to document the "consanguinity and affinity of the human family" through the study of philology which he summarizes as:

> Philology has proved itself an admirable instrument for the classification of nations into families upon the basis of linguistic affinities. A comparison of the vocables and of the grammatical forms of certain languages has shown them to be dialects of a common speech; and these dialects, under a common name, have thus been restored to their original unity as a family of languages. In this manner, and by this instrumentality,

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[16] While McDonald maintains the term "Tukudh" as the name for the Gwich'in language, Ritter (1976:7-8) points out that the dialect McDonald was using for his translations was actually that of the Gwichya Gwich'in of Tsiigehchic (formerly Arctic Red River).

> the nations of the earth have been reduced, with more or less of certainty, to a small number of independent families.
>
> [Morgan 1871: v]

In order to accomplish this classificatory goal, he had learned people from around the world fill out schedules and questionnaires as they pertained to local languages. He believed that of greatest importance was the list of kinship terms. These he then categorized by linguistic affinity into family, classes, branches, and nations or languages. Based upon information from Richardson, Murray, "Mrs. Murray", Hardisty, and McDonald (Morgan 1871: 237-241) he was able to declare that Gwich'in should be defined as follows: family—Ganowanian[17]; class—Athapasco-Apache; branch—Athapaskan Nations; nations or language—"Kutchin-Louchieux" and "Tukuthe" (1871:291). Based upon the schedules[18] filled out by "Herdisty" (Morgan misspells Hardisty throughout his work) and McDonald, Morgan believes that the Kutchin or "Louchieux" of Hardisty and the Tukuthe of McDonald are different peoples. He does note that the schedule filled out by McDonald was far more complete than that of Hardisty and that Hardisty seems to have misunderstood the questionnaire (1871: 238, 239), but it is interesting that at this point in history McDonald and Hardisty were both writing about the same groups (or at least very closely related groups) of Gwich'in from Alaska. Morgan believes that McDonald is writing about the Peel River Gwich'in because by the time Morgan wrote his treatise on the human family McDonald was stationed at Fort McPherson. Thus it is very likely that the work of Morgan misrepresents the Gwich'in due to Hardisty's lack of linguistic skills and McDonald's carrying over the name Tukudh to describe all Gwich'in including the Teetl'it Gwich'in of the Peel River.

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[17] Ganowanian is a term taken from the Seneca language (with which Morgan was familiar) and means "bow and arrow" thus the family is taken to mean bow and arrow people (Morgan 1871:131).
[18] These are apparently the questionnaires to which Slobodin (1981) is referring.

Just prior to and then following the sale of Russian America to the United States of America in 1867, there was a push to catalogue and describe the various features of this land by American governmental and non-governmental organizations. In 1866 William H. Dall as Director of the Scientific Corps of the Western Union Telegraph Expedition was assigned to investigate the "Natural History of this interesting region" (1870: vi) for the aforementioned telegraph company and for the Smithsonian Institution. The results of this expedition beginning in 1866 were published in 1870 in a book entitled Alaska and its Resources. Within this text are ethnographic notes including some on Gwich'in residing on the American side of the border. These notes were then re-compiled and supplemented by Dall in 1877 in a book entitled Tribes of the Extreme Northwest. During his exploration of the Yukon River in 1866, Dall met and learned a great deal about the Gwich'in from Robert McDonald who was still stationed at Fort Yukon at that time (1870: 110-111, Whymper 1868: 232). His 1877 work sketches out the various names which have been used to designate the various "tribes" in the past, and cites who called them by which name (1877:29-32). He also incorrectly designates the Han and Tuchone as Gwich'in "tribes" (1877: 25). He does use the local Gwich'in autonyms throughout his work except when citing other authors.

Donald A. Cadzow spent 1912 through 1916 within Gwich'in country for unknown reasons but his familiarity with the country was such that he was contracted by The Museum of the American Indian to return in 1917 and again in 1919 to "collect data from the natives" (Cadzow 1925a: 173). The information he collected was compiled into two brief reports (1925a, 1925b). His "Habitat of Loucheux Bands" (1925a) describes the various "Loucheux bands" (and gives literature its first map of the various Gwich'in

groups, which following Dall (1877) includes the Han as a Gwich'in "band") and their geographical locations including some notes on their diet and hunting techniques. His "Old Loucheux Clothing" (1925b) makes an analysis of a suit of Gwich'in clothing acquired by the Museum from a Long Island, New York donor several years prior (1925b:292). He concludes that the people now no longer wear this sort of clothing.

There are a few "travelers descriptions" of Gwich'in country from the early twentieth century. Most are of little consequence to this study as the authors did not endeavor to make ethnographic notes. One exception is found in the writings of Michael H. Mason, a self-proclaimed romantic explorer who took guidance from the writings of Ovid and Euclid (1924: 1-2). Mason organized his notes from his two-year sojourn beginning in 1920 in The Arctic Forests (1924). He makes an ethnographic contribution with his chapter on the "Takudh Kutchin" (1924: 21) that is his designation for the whole nation. Like McDonald, he takes "Takudh" to be the name of the language and the "tribe" which is common to all the people who designate themselves with the term "Kutchin" (1924: 12).

Cornelius Osgood and His Contemporaries, Synonymy and The Tribal Debate:

Mackenzie, Franklin, Richardson, Murray, Hardisty, Jones, Petitot, McDonald, Dall, Cadzow and Mason, as mentioned above, were the authors whose published works about Gwich'in were available to the anthropologist Osgood at the time of his first fieldwork in 1932. Synonymy has been presented as a central theme throughout much of my evaluation of these descriptions because it was a major concern by the time of Osgood and indeed has continued to be for almost all who have come after him. Throughout the history of the literature, presented above, there has been a constant

referral by the various scholars to what the people have been called in the past. Two years prior to the publication of his ethnography on the Gwich'in, Osgood published a treatise on the distribution and synonymy of the "Kutchin tribes" (1934). One year later, Robert McKennan, who had done field work with Gwich'in in Alaska in 1933, lauded this short work of Osgood's by pointing out that it "performed a real service for students of the American Indian" (1935: 369) through the sorting out the various terms.

Osgood had three major concerns when writing his piece on synonymy. First, he felt that there needed to be one clear term used for all the "Kutchin" (1934: 168-169). He believed that terms such as "Loucheux" or "Tukudth" were not appropriate because they meant different things to different people; "Loucheux" to some meant the eastern Gwich'in and to others it meant the whole of what Osgood referred to as the nation.

Second, he believed that there needed to be a clear distinction between those "tribes" which he considered to be "True Kutchin" (1934: 169) and those that he called "The So-Called Kutchin" (1934: 175). Inherent in this distinction was his notion that the "True Kutchin" belonged to tribes which comprised a "nation" (1934: 171), while those which may have been referred to improperly as Kutchin in past works (his "so-called Kutchin") do not belong to "tribes" who *self-recognize* themselves as part of that nation. The confusion over who are the true Gwich'in arose out of the writings of Dall (1877) and Cadzow (1925a). Asch and Goddard (1981:348) further note that some scholars may have used "Kutchin" in the past to refer to all Mackenzie River Athapaskans.

Osgood's third concern was to eliminate confusion by categorizing all the ethnonyms that have been used into a set of eight "Kutchin Tribes" (1934:169). Through this categorization, he is able to trace the history of these names and locate the associated

groups geographically and culturally. Osgood's eight "Kutchin Tribes" are: 1) "Yukon Flats Kutchin" or the "Kutchakutchin," spelled variously in other sources[19] as Koocha, Kootchin, Kouscha, Kotch-á-, Kutcha, Kutchia, and Kut'qa; 2) "Birch Creek Kutchin" or the "Tennuthkutchin" referred to variously as Birch Indians, Birch River Indians, Gens de Bouleaux, and Tennuth; 3) "Chandelar River Kutchin" or "Natsitkutchin" referred to as Gens de Large, Natche, Natsik, Natsit, and Neyetse; 4) "Black River Kutchin" or "Tranjikkutchin" spelled also as Tchandjoeri; 5) "Crow River Kutchin" or "Vuntakutchin" spelled as Vondt-way, Vanta, Vantah, Voen, Vunta, Vuntet, Vuntit, and Zjen; 6) "Upper Porcupine River Kutchin" or "Tukkuthkutchin" referred to and spelled variously as Dakaz, Dakkade, Deguthee, Klovén, Louches, Rat Indians, Takkuth, Takuth, Takkuth, and Takudh; 7) "Peel River Kutchin" or "Tatlitkutchin" spelled as Taitsick, Tatlit, Tetlet, and T'etllet; 8) "Mackenzie Flats Kutchin" or "Nakotchokutchin" referred to and spelled as Kwitcha, Kwit'qa, Nakotcho, Nâkotchgo-ondjig, and Nekwichoujik (Osgood 1934: 178).

Of secondary importance to his three major concerns was his contention that the term "tribe" was a better descriptor than that of "band" used by Cadzow (1925a). His justification for using the term "tribe" was that these groups of people were culturally distinct, due to the fact that they inhabited different environments (1934:170). These eight tribal designations form the structure around which his ethnography was written.

The links between environment, geography and synonymy are crucial to the academic as well as the aboriginal categorization of Gwich'in. Osgood, as well as many of the scholars who came before him, realized that the term Gwich'in and its variants is a "linguistic element" (Osgood 1970: 13) that means "one who dwells." This element is

[19] All alternate spellings are those that existed in 1934.

rarely used on its own in Gwich'in, but rather it is combined with a geographical location to describe the people who live there. Thus, much of the confusion with sorting out who is actually Gwich'in arises out of the misinterpretation of Gwich'in ethnonyms for other peoples. As mentioned above, Dall (1877:25) and Cadzow (1925a:174) believed the "Hun" to be a Gwich'in band, and while it is true that the Han and the Gwich'in share much in common, neither of them recognize Han as part of the Gwich'in nation. However, when Gwich'in people talk about the Han they refer to them as Han Gwich'in, "those who dwell along the river" (Osgood 1934:175) or "hurry people" referring to the fast waters of the Yukon River where they live (Cadzow 1925a:174).

Since the publication of Osgood's seminal ethnography there have been other major ethnographic works published by six anthropologists: Robert McKennan, Douglas Leechman, Richard Slobodin, Asen Balikci, Richard Nelson, and Shepard Krech III.[20] Unlike Osgood and some of his predecessors, each of these anthropologists focuses on one particular group of Gwich'in whether they call it a community, band or tribe. In addition there have also been a few re-evaluations of what Osgood called tribal distribution and synonymy that I will bring to light in due course.

After completing nine weeks of fieldwork during the summer of 1933 with the Gwich'in of the Chandelar River basin, Robert McKennan wrote a reply to Osgood's piece in the American Anthropologist. While his experience with Gwich'in was brief, he had also done considerably more research earlier with neighboring Athapascan "Tanana" peoples. He agrees with Osgood about the preference for calling the Gwich'in groups tribes rather than bands. To Osgood's list, he adds a ninth "tribe," that of the "Dihia

[20] Krech is sometimes referred to as an historian or an ethnohistorian rather than as an anthropologist. While he has an impressive record of historical work, his doctoral studies were primarily anthropological in nature.

Kutchin" who had lived to the northwest of the Gwich'in with whom he conducted fieldwork. "Dihia" meant "farthest distant" and refers to the fact that these were the most westerly dwelling of the Kutchin Tribes. He believed these people to be extinct through warfare, disease and intermarriage with the "Chandelar Kutchin" (McKennan 1935: 369).

McKennan's reconstructive ethnography—like Osgood he was attempting to piece the culture back together— The Chandalar Kutchin, was a long time coming and was not written until 1962-63 and then published only in 1965 (McKennan 1965:11). Despite the fact that his ethnography was only half of his stated mission,[21] it does contain a great deal of information organized in a similar fashion to that of Osgood (1970) and other reconstructive ethnographies of the time. Thus, like Osgood, he had chapters dealing with cultural geography, subsistence, material culture, social relations, and "intellectual life." Following a debate set forth by Slobodin (1962: 66), he discusses the argument made by Osgood regarding the use of "tribe" as a designate (McKennan 1965:14-15).

Douglas Leechman's work with the "Vanta Kutchin" was primarily archaeological in nature (1954:1); however, he did compile some ethnographic notes into a brief (35 pp.) National Museum of Canada Bulletin titled The Vanta Kutchin. His fieldwork was just over a month in duration during the summer of 1946. He describes the Vanta Kutchin as a "sub-group of Loucheux" (ibid) and while he uses the term "Kutchin" when discussing the local group he refers to "Loucheux" as the larger culture group.

Richard Slobodin (1959) wrote a doctoral dissertation on the social organization of the "Peel River Kutchin Band." This work was later condensed into a National

[21] McKennan was an anthropologist with wide interests and he spent much of his time in the field undertaking an anthropometric study of Gwich'in men for comparison with an earlier study of Tanana men. The results of these "measurements" were published (McKennan 1964) just prior to his ethnography.

Museum of Man bulletin (1962) entitled Band Organization of the Peel River Kutchin. Like with the work of McKennan there was a significant period of time that elapsed between the fieldwork and the publication of the materials. The research for these monographs was undertaken during 1946-1947, although Slobodin had considerable previous exposure to Gwich'in culture during an extended "canoe trip" through Gwich'in country from the summer of 1938 to the spring of 1939 (1962:11). He has also published a wide number of articles in scholarly journals, most of which are a combination of ethnohistory and ethnography. His ethnography was the first to have as its central focus the Gwich'in dwelling around the Peel River. As this ethnography concerns itself with the social organization of these people, and as can be discovered from its title, Slobodin debated Osgood's (1934) belief in the "tribe" as an organizing feature.

Slobodin (1962:66) following the lead of Kroeber (1955:304-5) felt that the use of the term "tribe" by Osgood (1934) and McKennan (1935) was inappropriate. Slobodin believed that the size of the community and its relative political autonomy was far more conducive to the definition of a band as forwarded by Honigmann (1946) and Kroeber (1955). McKennan (1965: 14) upon re-evaluation, argued that Slobodin is essentially correct in his critique but that the debate is really about the change in the anthropological definition of tribe over the years. Like Osgood, McKennan (1965:14-15) was struck by the feeling of group unity that was communicated to him by his Gwich'in instructors and thus despite the population problem, he felt that the term band could be applied to the individual communities making up one of Osgood's tribes, but that "tribe" was probably still a better definition for each of the nine groups making up the totality of Gwich'in. Slobodin, on the other hand, was primarily concerned with social structure in his

monograph and it seems that he was therefore obliged to maintain a certain degree of consistency with the literal definitions of these terms at that time:

> Although Osgood...and McKennan...refer to each Kutchin community in its river basin as a tribe, it is felt here that use of the term "band" for the politically autonomous community would be more consonant with general usage for native North America (Kroeber). The size of the Peel River community also conforms to Kroeber's suggestion of under 500 members for the band.
>
> [Slobodin 1962: 66]

By the time Slobodin wrote his ethnography, the Teetl'it Gwich'in were designated by the government of Canada as "Loucheux Band Number Seven," which mirrors the popularity of the word "Loucheux" as the name of these people amongst those speaking "frontier English" (Slobodin 1962:66). Slobodin points out that the people call themselves "Tetlit k^{w}uč'in" in their own language but that they may be referred to by themselves and others using many combinations of the words Peel River, Peels River, or Fort McPherson and Indians, Loucheux, or Kutchin (ibid). He also notes that there is a degree of fluidity concerning the band designations for individuals. For example, there are those who maintain the word Teetl'it Gwich'in as the name of their group (be it tribe, band or other) despite the fact that one or both of their parents may have come from other Gwich'in groups and possibly other non-Gwich'in groups (Slobodin 1962:67).

Asen Balikci focused his study of "Vunta Kutchin" around the issue of social change. Balikci's Vunta Kutchin Social Change: A Study of the People of Old Crow, Yukon Territory (1963) was originally written as a report for the Northern Co-ordination and Research Centre, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources Canada.[22]

[22] Prior to the release of this report Balicki did publish a paper (1962) that summarizes the family organization aspect of his larger report.

Balikci's work divides Vuntut Gwich'in culture into three historical periods: "Traditional Culture, Period of Change, and Contemporary Culture" (1963:i). "Traditional Culture" uses the classificatory system proposed by Osgood (1934); however, Balikci makes no effort with his "contemporary culture" to propose a new system for his description of a people who he feels exhibit "cultural transformations… [that] touch upon almost every aspect of social life" (1963:152).

Richard Nelson spent a total of one year with Koyukon and Gwich'in people in Alaska during a few trips in the years 1969-1971. His ethnographic work with the "Tranjik Kutchin" of Chalkyitsik, Alaska was documented and published in a book titled Hunters of the Northern Forest (1973). Slobodin (1981:532) describes this ethnography as a "circumstantial account of subsistence techniques," probably due to Nelson's own admission that his primary source of data was observational rather than conversational. This ethnographic technique was not Nelson's choice but was due to his lack of competence in speaking Gwich'in (Nelson 1973:7) and the fact that few Gwich'in individuals in this community were still speaking English. As Slobodin points out, Nelson's work is primarily concerned with describing the various hunting, fishing and gathering techniques that people use in this sub-arctic community to procure the necessities of life. Nelson is the first scholar I know of to use the spelling "Gwich'in," although he does so only when trying to communicate the proper pronunciation of the word "Kutchin," which is the spelling he uses throughout his ethnography (ibid:13). Nelson also uses Osgood's tribal categorization of the Gwich'in groups (ibid: 15) but uncritically notes that among the Black River or Tranjik Kutchin there are few

individuals who can trace all of their immediate ancestry back to people born in that area (ibid: 21).

Shepard Krech III based the ethnographic portions of his 1974 Ph.D. thesis entitled Changing Trapping Patterns in Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories on his field research in Fort McPherson that lasted from September 1971 to mid-October 1972. His thesis is primarily concerned with social change resulting from introduced activities and institutions such as the fur trade. His work is influenced by the anthropological notion of "shifting orientations" from bush life to town life. This popular mode of inquiry at the time about sub-arctic hunters is characterized by the work of anthropologists who were contemporaries of Krech and influenced his study such as Balikci (1963), Van Stone (1963), Helm (1961), Honigmann and Honigmann (1970), and Vallee (1967). Krech's work refers to the people using the historical terms of the time. Thus when he is discussing the period of history when Osgood was working with Gwich'in he refers to them using Osgood's terms. His work makes no blatant attempt at trying to sort out the previous debates about bands and tribes, preferring instead to focus on his own terms. As his work largely focuses upon shifting orientations he prefers to use terms such as community and settlement rather than anything with what might be considered to have a static organizational tone. Thus he points out that:

> The term community refers in the first instance to the grouping of Peel River people, including treaty or non-treaty Kutchin and Metis, who live within specific delimited territorial boundaries centered on the settlement of Fort McPherson, and who consider themselves and are considered by others as comprising an entity distinct from other surrounding ones.
>
> [Krech 1974:85]

Key to his distinction of the "Peel River Kutchin" as a community is the creation of the settlement of Fort McPherson. Thus in Krech's work what is of importance is not only

the geographical location stressed by previous scholars but also the temporal dimensions of how people came to be "settled" (ibid).

In 1979 Krech entered further into the discourse on Gwich'in synonymy and social organization with a paper that argues that as late as the nineteenth century there were ten "aboriginal Kutchin bands." This paper not only argues that there was a tenth Gwich'in group called the "Nakotcho Kutchin," but it also backs up Slobodin's argument regarding the idea that the totality of Gwich'in should be called a tribe and that each sub-group should be referred to as a band. Krech feels that the local units that people were describing in the historical records conform most closely to Helm's (1965) "regional band." The regional band is a group which tends to be endogamous (although not strictly by any means) and is made up of smaller "local bands" or "task units" which are fluid in their make up and come together seasonally in order to accomplish certain goals (Krech 1979: 109). As in his thesis, Krech only refers to bands and tribes as they are represented in the historical data. Krech argues that the tribe Osgood referred to as the "Mackenzie Flats Kutchin" really consisted of two separate bands, the Kwitcha and the Nakotcho (1979: 111) and the Nakotcho became extinct due to disease and a shift towards residence patterns that acculturated the Nakotcho into the Kwitcha.

Since the time of the above ethnographies there has been a shift in the orthography of the various Gwich'in dialects and the spellings for the various groups have shifted as well. Beginning in the mid 1970's John Ritter of the Yukon Native Languages Centre focused on creating an orthography which was practical and as close to phonetically correct as possible using an introduced alphabet (Ritter 1976: 2). Ritter's dictionary of "Tetlit Gwich'in" nouns argues that the spelling "Kutchin" should be

abolished in favour of "Gwich'in" because it represents a miss-pronunciation (1976: 4). The shift to the spelling "Gwich'in" was fairly gradual, by 1981 Goddard and Slobodin (530-531) note that its occurrence is confined primarily to the educational materials used in Alaska and that its appearance in Canada was merely a novelty. Therefore, Slobodin titled his treatise on Gwich'in in the 1981 Handbook of North American Indians, Vol.6 Subarctic "Kutchin."

In Slobodin's contribution to the handbook he lists Osgood's "tribes" (pointing out that they are really bands in doing so) and attempts to modernize the listing by pointing out that there are only six of these "bands" left and several "subcommunities." The "bands" are Arctic Red River, Peel River, Crow flats, Black River, Yukon Flats, and Chandalar. He furthers the analysis of Gwich'in "bands" through his elaboration upon the existence of what he calls subcommunities, a point which is of importance:

> The subcommunities were the Mackenzie Delta Loucheux and Birch Creek. The Loucheux of the Mackenzie Delta are centered in the towns of Aklavik and Inuvik. Some families from there have trapped on the lower and middle Anderson River. The Delta Loucheux are mainly of Peel River and Arctic Red River background. At Birch Creek a very small number of families have maintained year-round residence, trading into Fort Yukon… or Circle Alaska.
>
> There have been other subcommunities , more or less ephemeral, in the historic period; one such was called the Rat Indians, trading into the now abandoned post of La Pierre House. Probably the largest such community was that formed at Moosehide, near Dawson, Yukon Territory, during the Klondike gold rush. It was largely a satellite settlement of Peel River people.
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> [Slobodin 1981:515]

The educational materials to which Goddard and Slobodin are referring in their discussion of the spelling "Gwich'in" came out of the Alaska Native Language Centre and include such works as the Dinjii Zhuh Ginjik Nagwan Tr'iłtsąjj: Gwich'in Junior

Dictionary compiled by Katherine Peter (1979). These works make no statement as to why they have changed the spelling, but following Ritter it can probably be traced to an attempt to come to a more phonetically correct pronunciation of the term. Both Ritter and Peter point out (Ritter blatantly and Peter through use) that the use of Gwich'in as a name for the people and the language only came about through translation of the local ethnonyms into European languages, and that the proper name for the people is Dinjii Zhuh. However, Ritter (1976: 45) and Firth (1991: 25) point out in their dictionaries that Dinjii Zhuh can mean either a Gwich'in person or any member of a First Nation. Anthropologists seem to have been slow to adopt this spelling, it was not until 1990 that the "Gwich'in" enters into regular anthropological usage in Canada. This shift came about through local action amongst elders and Gwich'in language planners in the community of Fort McPherson. The Gwich'in Language and Cultural Project began in the early 1980's when Sarah Stewart and Sarah Jerome started the Loucheux Language Project (as noted above, by this point in history, the Canadian Government was still referring to the Teetl'it Gwich'in as Loucheux Band Number Seven). By the mid 1980's there was consensus amongst the various Gwich'in organizations and their partners at the Arctic Institute of North America that the people should take it upon themselves to dispose of the term Loucheux in all official capacities:

> "Loucheux" was the term given to the Gwich'in by the French Fur Traders; it means "slant eyed". Once the project began, we made a decision to use only the tribal name "Gwich'in" and to ask all other agencies in town to change also. It is wonderful now to hear the Band office phone answered "Teetl'it Gwich'in Band" and to see the new Co-op store sign read, "Teetl'it Co-op". This is a small change but it reflects the growing awareness of the right to control one's own designation by the use of traditional names rather than imposed ones.
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> [Ryan and Robinson 1990: 71]

There have been some changes to the orthographies in the Northwest Territories, The Yukon and Alaska which have shifted the spellings of the various Gwich'in groups but the word "Gwich'in" has persevered as the name of the nation due to what all the past scholars have noted about a self-recognized common identity and to modern, shared political goals. During the early 1990's all of the Gwich'in communities were deeply involved in various political struggles with various states. In Alaska, the Gwich'in were struggling for proper recognition of their rights having not signed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. In the Yukon, the Vuntut Gwich'in was in the final stages of settling a Claim with Canada and the Yukon Governments. In the Northwest Territories, the Gwich'in split from the Dene land claim process and settled their own claim in 1992. These new formal relations with the respective states lead to a cementing of the spelling "Gwich'in" in political, academic and popular literatures.[23]

Bands, Tribes, Communities and The Accordion Model:

One of the great problems of designates such as tribes and bands is that they tend to be indexes of categories that relate more to the ideologies of European colonialism and its academic offshoots than to anything really found on the ground or recognized by the people themselves. In tackling this problem in Southern Africa where all cultural patterns were designated as being tribal, Archie Mafeje points out:

> It is usually argued that social behaviour in Africa is so diverse, so inconsistent, and so fluid that it is nigh impossible to classify or treat it with any amount of consistency. I am inclined to think that the problem in Africa is not one of empirically diversified behaviour but mainly one of *ideology*, and specifically the ideology of "tribalism." European colonialism, like any epoch, brought with it certain ways of reconstructing the African reality. It regarded African societies as particularly tribal. This approach produced certain blinkers or ideological predispositions that

[23] This is not to say that the discourse between these literatures and the Gwich'in people themselves has not been important in this cementing process.

> made it difficult for those associated with the system to view these societies in any other light. Hence certain modes of thought among European scholars in Africa and their African counterparts have persisted, despite the many important economic and political changes that have occurred in the continent over the last 75-100 years. Therefore, if tribalism is thought of as particularly African, then the ideology itself is particularly European in origin.
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> [Mafeje 1971: 253]

While it is certainly true that categories such as tribe and band have arisen out of colonial discourse and academic training based on some of the most Eurocentric social evolutionary discourse in the 19th century, it is highly problematic to paint all of the anthropological materials with the same brush and Mafeje (1971: 255-56) recognizes this along with the problem of not allowing any foreign imposed categories to exist whether they give a fairly accurate picture or not. The fact is that many of the anthropologists working with the Gwich'in and with neighboring Dene people were trying their hardest to describe in an accurate manner what the lives of these people were like—as they found them—in relation to a larger body of anthropological knowledge, and the debate over tribe and band as the most accurate designate seems to have corresponded to this fact more than to the position of the Gwich'in in a social evolutionary hierarchy.[24] However further problems arise out of the ethnographic perspective of the various anthropologists and this has had a great influence on the debate.

In 1997 Regna Darnell gave a paper at the Twenty-Ninth Algonquian Conference in Thunder Bay and later published (Darnell 1998), which presented a critique of the assumptions of some ethnographers that they could describe what was happening on the ground with models such as bands and tribes; however, it was also a powerful reminder that one should be careful not to throw out these past ethnographies just because they

[24] There are, of course, exceptions to this as noted throughout the previous two sections of this chapter.

seem historically static from today's perspective (Darnell 1998). While her argument centers on Algonquian communities the central argument that she makes comes from communication with and the writing of Michael Asch (1988) on the role of the Drum Dance in a Dene community. Her argument is that people who have been described as "nomadic hunters" put into practice a social structure best described as an accordion model that necessitates a temporal perspective to understand. Thus what some ethnographers describe as the permanent composition of a particular band or tribe may in fact just be part of a more far reaching structure seen from the perspective of that particular season or year and that this adaptability is key to the physical and cultural survival of these people:

> What anthropologists have characterized as band, tribe, community and nation reflect shifting moments in such sets of pragmatic decisions. The number of people who live in a given home place follows a cycle of contraction and expansion through the individual life cycle and in relation to ongoing obligations within the public life of the home community. The accordion retains its flexibility and adaptability
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> [Darnell 1998: 104]

The history of the ethnography of Gwich'in can certainly be read in this light and Gwich'in critiques of these ethnographies based on definitional errors can be more fully understood. The early descriptions reflect what was observed on the ground at that particular moment. The appearance and disappearance of Gwich'in groups throughout the literature and the confusion about synonymy can be explained to some extent using this model.[25] Much ethnographic work has depended on research done during one particular time of the year (McKennan's work is a prime example as he bases his knowledge of Gwich'in culture on nine weeks of summer research) and what were described as bands or triblets during this period may not have been so described at another point. For

[25] One would want to be careful not to rule out other catastrophic causes for the disappearance of people.

example, during the winter Gwich'in families would set up meat camps. These camps may have comprised a single or a group of families working together to hunt caribou. These groups of families may have been identified by an ethnographer as individual bands and named by the ethnographer after the place where they currently "stayed."[26] However, should that ethnographer have come across the whole community when they came together for various reasons, they may have been described as a tribe. Furthermore, those who based much of their accounts on the information given by a couple of individuals at trading posts might come to a skewed idea about how political bodies functioned within this area.

June Helm (2000:168-170) points out that these "trading chiefs" were middle-men for autonomous kindreds, these kindreds were not guided in any meaningful political way by these individuals, but the chiefs were respected for their hunting and trading abilities; however, the assumption that these individuals did speak for others often fulfilled the European assumptions about the function of tribes.

If one returns to the words of Thomas and Eileen Koe presented in the introduction it is possible to understand how their frustration with being defined by outside individuals and agencies is historically contextualized in the literature written about the Gwich'in. From the very first contact with Europeans, assumptions and classificatory systems have been imposed, debated and then restructured and it is only very recently that Gwich'in terms and understandings have been given their full due. Thomas Koe begins to answer why some researchers have had problems with eliciting

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[26] "Staying" is an important aspect of local understandings about people and place. One often hears elders talk about how someone used to stay here, but now stays there, and their questions about people from outside of their region are usually termed in reference to where people stay.

information by returning to this problem which he understands as being at the root of many poorly thought out assumptions about his people and their lifeways.

From my perusal through the literature I have identified two consistent interlinked dimensions to how the Gwich'in have been defined throughout the period of contact. First there is the problem of who they are in relation to a wide body of sometimes-conflicting synonyms for the people, the nation, and the local group. It seems clear that the Gwich'in themselves have had no trouble in regarding themselves as a large political body translated in the works of some early explorers and missionaries as a nation. The second dimension that arises out of this problem with synonymy is that of a different level of anthropological categorization, namely do these groups of people who make up the Gwich'in nation correspond best to the idea of a tribe or to that of a band. The current preferred way of speaking about this level of social organization in Gwich'in country is that the Gwich'in nation is composed of several closely culturally related communities who have strong traditional ties to specific, sometimes overlapping land and water bases. However, these anthropological categorizations about the Gwich'in did not arise in a theoretical vacuum. The next chapter will delve deeper into how the debates over nomenclature and social organizational features arose in part due to theories put forth about the connection between ecological conditions, economy and social evolution. Furthermore it will examine the resulting political actions taken by the state due, in part, to such theories of social evolution and the struggles that Gwich'in and other First Nations have had when dealing with such assumptions.

Chapter Three
Economic History

Necessary Caveats:

In the last chapter, I presented an answer to a perplexing problem that arises out of questions about locality, synonymy, and the debate about bands and tribes in earlier anthropological and commonly accessible histories related to the definition of the Teetl'it Gwich'in. Key to the misunderstandings which arise out of these inquiries are misrepresentations of the Gwich'in due to their social structure that Darnell (1998) has referred to as an accordion model. However this only answers half of the question put forward by people from outside of the community. After presenting a shortened version of the problem with synonymy to these people, the usual response is to ask further questions related to the interface between economics, history, political organization, and ecology. For example, I may get asked if they are hunters or trappers, do they grow anything, or if they still hunt for a living. As can be ascertained by the debate over whether the aboriginal and early contact Gwich'in were best described as having a band or tribe type political structure, these sorts of questions now asked by lay-people was long an area of fascination in anthropology and other social sciences. Much of the impetus for the question as a central focus of the anthropology of the Gwich'in came from earlier debates about social evolution and reference to the position of the Gwich'in on the bottom rung of this imaginary ladder. In the writings of Durkhiem and Mauss (1963: 63) they use the evidence provided by Petitot (1887) to argue that "the Loucheux

or Déné Dindjé, the most northern, the most bastardized,[27] but also the most primitive of Indians" retain a fairly complex kinship system despite representing the lowest form of extant humanity. Or in the blatantly racist writings of William Hardisty and Strachan Jones (1886) and others presented in the last chapter, the Gwich'in have been largely portrayed according to a view arising out of their economy or "most northern" subsistence pattern, which was thought to be closely related to ecology. Even in early writings supposed to be more laudatory in nature than the writings of Hardisty, Jones, Durkheim and Mauss this idea of the ecological determination of social evolution endures. For example The Catholic Encyclopedia of 1910 describes the "Loucheux:"

> They are as a rule superior, physically and mentally, to the majority of the northern Dénés. Tall and of a rather pleasing appearance, they are more manly than their southern neighbours. Owing to the large extent of their habitat, their manners and customs cannot be represented as uniform. East and west of the Rocky Mountains they were originally remarkable for their fine beaded and befringed leather costume, the most conspicuous part of which was a coat with a peaked appendage in front and behind. Their footgear was made of one piece with the leggings, the counterpart among most American aborigines of the white man's trousers. During the winter they lived in semi-spherical skin lodges, not unlike those of the Tuskis of the eastern Asiatic coast, and in summer they replaced these by shelters usually made of coniferous boughs, generally erected in pairs of face to face dwellings so that a single fire on the outside served for both. Their tribal organization varies according to their environment. While east of the Rocky Mountains they have preserved the original patriarchy of the Dénés in all its primitive simplicity, some of the western tribes have adopted a sort of matriarchy, with chiefs, clans, totems and other consequent institutions.
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> [Morice 1910: 367-368]

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[27] It should be noted that in the pages of Petitot (1887: 15 and 20) cited by Durkheim and Mauss there is no mention of bastardization. In these pages Petitot is describing a kinship pattern based on moieties and is using translated elements from Gwich'in folk taxonomy that refers to different types of people from different localities. Petitot translates these as "races," and goes on to describe them using French ideology about racial categorization. It is my hypothesis that Durkheim and Mauss mistook this discourse about Gwich'in moieties, or at least took it further than originally intended, and ascribed new meanings of racial mixing into their understanding about northern Dene kinship, hence their insistence that it represents a bastardized system.

Taking the above quote of Morice into account one can see that there has been a considerably long history in the belief in a "stimulus-response relationship" (Asch 1980: 46) between social organization and ecology. In Anthropology, since the late 1960's and the publication of the papers of the Man the Hunter conference (Man the Hunter, Lee and DeVore 1968) there has been a vigorous investigation into the links between kinship and ecology, especially with regard to aboriginal hunters and gatherers (e.g., Helm 1968, Murdock 1968, Hiatt 1968).[28] Of course, in Anthropology this idea has roots that stretch even deeper into evolutionary models of social organization. However, as some scholars working with the Dene have argued (i.e., Asch 1977, 1979, 1980; and Helm 1965, 1968, 1969) much of the focus on ecological determinism came from the "ecological-evolutionary" (Asch 1979: 81) school referred to by its main proponent Julian Steward as "cultural ecology." Steward's basic argument is "multilinear evolution" which is "based on the assumption that significant regularities in cultural change occur, and it is concerned with the determination of cultural laws" (1955: 18-19). Put rather simply, Steward's model argues that cultures found in similar ecological situations[29] will also have the same social structures. I believe this has a great deal to do with popular European reasonings on the place of aboriginal peoples within the larger folk taxonomy of "wilderness."

In a presidential address at the University of Iowa, June Helm (1986) points out how a cultural ecological approach was *de rigeur* in the late 1950's, the time she first headed to the field to work with Mackenzie Dene. She points out how in two ways this

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[28] For a far more complete list of references dedicated to this subject between the late 1960's and the late 1970's see Bishop and Krech (1980: 34).

[29] This should not be confused with environments because Steward noted that the environments may differ but the relationship between people and the problem of acquiring food may be similar in ecology (1955: 166-167)

approach was insufficient. First is that it was overly deterministic about what sorts of social organization she should find among a people who, according to Steward and later Service (1962), represented simple, primitive patrilineal systems. What Helm found was a far more complex social structure that she referred to as "nodal kindred" (Helm 1965: 380). The second shortcoming of the model was that it presumed that the influence of contact had been so severe as to make any study of "aboriginal" systems impossible. This, of course, is a self-fulfilling theory, i.e., they used to represent simplistic (what Asch (2003) refers to as pre-social) systems of social organization based around simple economies formulated out of response to ecological conditions; but the evidence for these systems can no longer be found because of the influence of advanced societies. The political dangers of this sort of reasoning are extreme when dealing with negotiations with a state, which until very recently has set out to deny any sort of aboriginal title. These dangers are best described in the work of Asch (1993) in Home and Native Land dealing with the Canadian situation, and, more recently, in Pinkoski and Asch (2002) on the detailed impact of Steward's work primarily on the status of aboriginal peoples in The United States of America but also the ramifications for aboriginal people living in Canada.

The political implications of seeing the Gwich'in through the lens of the popular version of Steward's academic model will be explored in the next chapter and it will indeed become apparent that the popular version, while being far more simplistic and reductionist certainly predated that of Steward and can be found in a persistence in the political belief in social-evolutionism. However, prior to providing an economic history of this culture area, certain caveats should be given and held in mind. These were the

sorts of cautions that Michael Asch and I[30] (Wishart and Asch 2003) discussed prior to writing a history of Western Canadian sub-arctic First Nations for the Oxford Companion Encyclopedia of Canadian History. When we were writing this entry, it was quickly noticed by both of us that what the encyclopedia's editor wanted was primarily an economic history which sketched out the massive changes that have befallen the Dene, and ending perhaps with a view that denies any sort of aboriginality to their present situation. What I felt while writing this piece was the same sort of two-fold problem that Helm had noted: that either People get depicted, first, as what Asch refers to as pre-social, and then, second, as so changed by the colonial process as to no longer be considered aboriginal. As to the first caution, Pinkoski and Asch have clearly demonstrated how the political motivations of Steward as an expert witness for the US government have bled through his theory and how it did indeed become public policy in the United States and Canada that there were such subjects as "pre-social" people, incapable of ever holding title:

> ... it is most striking with respect to his major theoretical work, *Theory of Culture Change*. Several chapters of this book are in fact in many places a *verbatim* recitation of his testimony in the Great Basin cases. Indeed, if the government's position, as stated above, seems familiar, it is because it was extracted from Steward's own words from several chapters of *Theory of Culture Change*. We believe that this was not known at the time because the government possibly did not permit Steward to publicize this fact. What concerns us is that his testimony becomes his theory and that this theory becomes the government's position in word as well as in concept. Through a veil of science, Steward provided the government with the rationalization that it required for its *terra nullius* policies.
>
> [Pinkoski and Asch 2002: 16]

[30] My cautionary approach came from a "gut-feeling," having worked recently with Dene who continue to hunt for a living, however, it should be realized and noted that Asch's has come from a much longer history of working with Dene and with theorizing about nation to nation relations within the Canadian colonial context.

As to the second cautionary note, Asch notes having worked on the Berger Inquiry and with the Dene trying to get the nation-to-nation relationship inherent in early treaties recognized:

> Furthermore, its political implications are potent. At the moment interests opposed to the Dene are arguing, among other things, that aboriginal society was so decimated by the early contact with the traders that the Dene of today are not the same as the Dene of the prehistoric period, and thus no longer possess an historically valid claim to recognition as a "national" entity. In this political atmosphere, it is one thing to make this assertion and be correct but quite another to make it on flimsy evidence and then discover, after that evidence has been used in the law courts to disenfranchise the Dene, that the hypothesis was entirely incorrect. So lets be careful lest the statements we casually make now come back to haunt us.
>
> [Asch 1980: 50]

When I began to do fieldwork with the Teetl'it Gwich'in I was not inclined to view their history or their present state in relation to either of these two scenarios of a pre-social or irrevocably changed people. Before venturing into an academic account of the history of how people made a living in this area, I would like to present a local understanding of the issue of economic history.

Local Conversations:

What follows is a transcript of a conversation I had with Thomas Koe and Neil Colin during the early fall of 2001; the content is similar to that of many conversations I had in Fort McPherson with other elders concerning the history of economic activities like hunting, fishing and trapping. We were sitting in Eileen Koe's fish camp, a setting that framed our talk about how the caribou would probably come early that year. Both Thomas and Neil had noticed signs that indicated to them that the caribou would be passing through the Richardson Mountains close to Fort McPherson within the next couple of weeks. Neil had noticed that there had been a few young bull caribou spotted in

the mountains in recent days. He explained that this was a good sign because often a few young bulls travel ahead of all the rest and scout out the country. Thomas had also noticed that the ptarmigan were starting to get together into large groups and that there seemed to be more of them. Ptarmigan can be found in the mountains all year in small groups of a few birds. Thomas explained:

> The elders always say daagoo [ptarmigan] come just before the caribou. They get together and fly just in front of all the caribou, so when we see daagoo like that we know its time to get ready.

Neil went on to say that someone had seen a really big wolf up in the mountains, as well, and that this was another sign that the caribou were getting close.

During the late summer and early fall, conversations revolve around the coming of the caribou and to a lesser extent hunting moose. Conversations such as these are keyed by the fact that it is a very exiting time and people begin to get anxious for the caribou to arrive or for someone to get a moose. Part of the excitement has to do with the addition of fresh meat to a diet that has consisted primarily of fish for most of the summer, and it also has to do with important cultural events that stem from such economic activities.

I was told to listen carefully. Such statements about paying particular attention are not common in my experience and it set this particular conversation apart from others. We had spoken earlier in the week about how people misunderstand Gwich'in history and how the people "from south, think they are experts," to use Neil's words. As Eileen explained there is a direct connection between the history of the Gwich'in as constructed by outsiders and the current actions of animal rights activists. We had also been talking about these actions earlier and Neil had been talking to me about how he tried to explain

to outsiders that their history is not one of cruelty to animals but rather of maintaining social cohesion. I was further instructed to pay attention to what was being said because Thomas pointed out that all that goes on today, "that stuff—nothing new." So we enter into the conversation at this point.

> Neil Colin: Yah. Ok. You want to know about the old days. You guys always want to know that stuff.
>
> RW: Uh-huh. Yah.
>
> Neil Colin: That's good. It's good to know. That's why I build those things, you know old-time fish house[31] and that cabin in town.[32]

Replica of Mad Trapper's Cabin built by Neil Colin, Fort McPherson

> RW: Yah, I've seen them. Those things are good to have around.
>
> Neil Colin: I don't know why I do those things, I just think it's good. For the kids and all the guys who come.
>
> [listening to the tape of this conversation, I hear the chatter of teacups and there is contemplative silence for nearly two minutes as people get up to put sugar in their tea…]

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[31] He is referring to smoke houses covered in spruce bark rather than plywood that is now the norm.
[32] Neil Colin built a replica of "The Mad Trapper of Rat River's pit cabin outside of the tourist information booth in Fort McPherson.

Neil Colin: Ok. Look, fall-time now. Willows drop the leaves, good to hunt rabbits. Soon the fish will be fat. When the ice comes, that's the best. Fat whitefish with lots of eggs. You know—

RW: Ya.

Neil Colin—then jigging for loche,[33] oh boy, loche liver with cranberries—everybody's happy,

Thomas Koe: but not you. [mutual laughter].[34]

Neil Colin: In the old days, it's like that too. The people are all up and down the river, but soon the caribou come and all the people come together. The people all come to the same place, when the white-man came it was the trading post, but before it would be the fish camp of the chief.

RW: The chief?

Neil Colin: Yah, not like the chief now. Used to be that the chief was a guy that was a good hunter, everybody like him because of this. Ok. he do things the right way, yah?

RW: Uh-huh

Thomas Koe: My great-grandfather was like that, they say he was an Eagle, he could fly around and tell everyone where the caribou are.

Neil Colin: Everybody get together and they talk for a while, maybe two, three days, I don't know. Anyway they talk about hunting caribou. So they decide that some will go up to the mountains by Rat River, some by Stoney Creek, some by Vittrekwa, some by Road River, some by other places. Each of these leads to the mountains, different places where the caribou might come. Caribou come to different places each year in the mountains but they always choose among the same places—

RW: Yah—

Neil Colin: So the people go to all the places the caribou might come, all the valleys way into the Yukon where the caribou might spend the winter. In the old days people had caribou fences to help them hunt the caribou but this took a lot of people helping, so when they came the people came

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[33] Lingcod or Burbot, from the French

[34] I never did acquire a taste for this delicacy. However, I did eat the flesh of the fish with no problem.

together again and hunted together, then they did not go far. It was better to just stay in that valley. You know.

Thomas Koe: My great-grandfather was really strong. He could run for a long time. Once, when the people were hungry he saw a small bunch of caribou, like how they are later in winter. He ran around them and kept them all together while shooting at them with arrows, *thook, thook, thook, thook*. Soon all were dead. Then he sent some meat with the dogs and when the people got the meat they all picked up and came to that spot. That's the way it was, everybody shared meat then. Then the people got strong and were able to go find more caribou in different places.

Neil Colin: Yah, the people relied on each other and sent word to each other to find the caribou.

Thomas Koe: The chiefs today should rent a plane and look for them. [laughter]

Thomas Koe: People used to stay in the mountains all winter. You know it's real warm up there. White guys never believe that but it's true, it's better to be up in the mountains in the wintertime.[35] Those old-timers would stay up there and make dry meat, make babies too [laughter]... they just lived off caribou, you know. Now people bring it back to town but then it was too far, it used to take four-five dogs to carry one *vadzaih cho*[36]

RW: Uh-huh, those big ones are heavy

Neil Colin: good-shape caribou, good to see, oh boy, everyone happy again.

RW: What then, did people just stay there all winter.

Thomas Koe: Not all the time, some follow the caribou way into the bush, way up,[37] those guys end up trapping martin and they run into lots of moose up there. Big moose. Once when Andrew was something like Jordan[38] we spent the winter up there and I shot moose. No kidding, Rob, I couldn't even move it, I skinned one side and packed the meat, only then could I turn it and do the rest, but fat! it was just like bacon.

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[35] This is often true during the winter, as temperature inversions frequently occur.
[36] A mature bull caribou, fall and early winter bulls weigh about 140 kg (300 lb.)
[37] He is referring to way up the tributaries to the Peel, some of which have their headwaters by Dawson city, some even further by Mayo.
[38] Andrew is Thomas's youngest son; Jordan is one of Thomas' grandchildren who was about 7 or 8 at this time. He hunted and brought home his first caribou last fall (2002), everyone is really proud.

Thomas Koe with swan.
Mackenzie River, Spring 1999

Kaylynn Koe learns to pluck geese, Spring 2000

Neil Colin: Some guys go down to the delta, stay there do some trapping for lynx, snare rabbits, get ready for breakup, oh boy, geese and swans. After breakup people start to hunt for rats, used to be really good money in rats, go out shoot a hundred in a night, sleep a few hours then work with the skins, then go out again — right up to middle of June people did that. Now hardly anybody bothers anymore, people still hunt rats for food but nobody makes a living from it. Before there was money in it, it was like that too, hardly anybody pass spring in the delta just stay up in the Yukon till break-up, then everybody come together again and start building moose-skin boats, it took about 12 skins to make a boat, everyone would get in these and go down to McPherson.

Thomas Koe: But it was real danger those boats, after break-up that water is really dangerous. Lots of people drowned coming down the river.

Moose skin boat circa 1910[39]

Neil Colin: Yah, real danger. But soon everyone get together again. The people from the delta bring in their rats and geese, the people from up river bring in all the furs and some dry meat. Everyone get together and we have feast and dance, oh boy, go all night. Then soon everyone go to fish camps all up and down the river and spend the summer making dry fish, split fish, put lots in pits.[40] You know we get whitefish, we call it łuk

[39] Photo of an information board at Nataiinlaii visitor centre.

[40] Dry fish are carefully prepared fish (mostly whitefish and inconnu) that are first beheaded and bled. Then the body is scaled and split by filleting the flesh off of the bones keeping the two sides attached by the tail and belly skin. Then the flesh is cut in a parallel fashion down to the skin every centimetre or so.

zhei, coney—sruh, herring—treeluk. Sometimes we get char too, eat that right away.

Eileen Koe makes dry-fish
Eight Miles, July 2001

Coney [inconnu] dry-fish being cured
Eight Miles, July 2001

Sometimes the backbone is left attached to the flesh and skin and dried along with it and sometimes it is detached and dried separately, both methods are pictured above. Before this is done two strips of flesh are taken from alongside of the spinal column and dried to make fish strips—often considered to be the best dried fish. The backbone part is usually used for dog food or stored until winter and used for baiting traps. Certain parts of the innards are kept and eaten as well as the heads, both of which may be boiled or "cooked to the fire." The fish are then hung in a smoke house where they are dried slowly. Split fish are just split in two and hung to smoke, these are usually eaten right away or kept for dog food. Another variation is "stick fish" which are hung whole—guts and all—by spearing the fish through the head with a stick and hanging them in the smoke house. These are meant for dog food. Pit fish are layered into a deep pit dug into the riverbank far back from the flood zone. The fish are preserved by the cold from the permafrost. The fish are then removed from the pit when the weather turns cold and the ambient air temperature can freeze them. They are then stored for the winter and are primarily used for dog food, but some well-preserved fish may be eaten during the next spring when other food becomes scarce.

This fish-pit eroded out of the bank of the Peel River at an abandoned site on an island about a mile up-river from the ferry crossing at Eight Miles during the summer of 2000. That spring and summer saw unusually high water conditions and the banks of the Peel collapsed in many places. In this instance it gave an opportunity to see a cross-section of how these fish-pits were constructed and how they continue to be constructed. Note the logs used to support and construct the ceiling that was then insulated with earth. A ladder can still be seen leading from the trap door to the pit's floor. Simon Snowshoe, who investigated this pit with us, said: "All up and down this river there is pits like this, everywhere people used to fish, at each eddy. Fishing used to be really good here, but then the river changed. Nobody fishes here now."

Thomas Koe: We used to fish lots. Now we still fish but we don't kill as much. We used to have to kill lots for the dogs in wintertime. But, look here, you know it used to be those nets would be just full of fish, now we get a few here and there but there doesn't seem to be as much of it since we started using ski-doos.

RW: Funny that, I guess its like those rats?[41]

Neil Colin and Thomas Koe: Uh-huh, Uh-huh

Neil Colin: We live off fish in summertime. The men, all day checking net, the women, all day cutting fish. Eat fish, boiled or cooked to the fire.

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[41] Thomas Koe had told me earlier is the spring how there used to be "lots of rats [muskrats] when people trapped them," but that their numbers seemed to have declined since the collapse of the fur market.

Oh boy, soon berries, you know blueberries, nakal.[42] Eat berries with fish, just like tonight, same way.

RW: Yah, Simon told me that, it used to be tough sometimes with only fish to eat.

Thomas Koe: Sometimes, but still you can usually get other stuff to eat.

[there is a long silence before Neil speaks again]

Neil Colin: One summer, not too long ago there was a guy staying with me out on Mackenzie, he was looking around at something, I don't know. We started to run out of grub and he started worrying, you know, I guess he thinks he won't eat again [laughter]. So I go down with a small net and set it right by the creek. Then I watch, soon swoosh, swoosh that net starts to move so I go and check. Big coney, sruh cho. So I take it back and say, "look coney here." I cut the fish and hang to smoke for a bit. Then I go back to check net again, before I get there I hear big splash in the creek, oh boy, beaver in there. I aim, you know with 30-30, and *toohh* I shoot beaver. I go back "look beaver here." Then I go back to check net again and I hear *who-who*, ahhh dazraii [tundra swan] coming. No shotgun so I aim carefully with 30-30 as it goes away from me— *toohh* and I knock it down. I go back and say "look swan here." Now, lots to eat and haven't checked net [laughter].

Thomas Koe: In my country it's hard to starve. But sometimes there's nothing.

Neil Colin: Yah, the old-timers had it really tough sometimes.

Thomas Koe: The moose should be running around now. Somebody'l shoot moose soon and everybody will eat some of that moose.

RW: uh-huh

Neil Colin: Yah, that's the way, everybody come together again.

As I said, this conversation is similar to the sorts of conversations one finds during this particular time of year. I have had conversations about the history of the area during other seasons as well and they always start with what is happening at that moment and then proceed to go through out the seasonal round pointing out the main features of

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[42] Cloudberries

each time of year, but it always comes back to what is going on now. My reason for including the photographs with the conversation is to both add context for the reader but also to provide a sense that this conversation evolved out of shared experiences that I had with both of these elders and much of how they frame their conversation depends upon myself as an interlocutor for their conversation knowing what they know I know or having seen the things they also saw with me, and, of course, all the conversations we have had in the past together. In addition, I wanted to include the photographs to demonstrate a continuity of living on the land that will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis. For the time being, I would like to discuss the aspect which this chapter is concerned: an overview of who the Gwich'in are as seen through the lens of economic issues.

An Economic Overview:

The recorded conversation transcribed above lends itself well to an academic discussion of various economic aspects of Gwich'in history. What follows draws heavily on a version of the economic history of the western Canadian Dene resulting from discussions Michael Asch and I had during the fall of 2002[43] and includes reference to the aspects talked about by Neil Colin and Thomas Koe as well as other sources.

The First Nations of the Western sub-arctic are often referred to collectively as the Northern Dene, and include speakers of several relatively closely related Athapaskan languages. Boreal forest and the transitional zone of boreal vegetation and tundra dominate the Northern Dene traditional territory. The history of western Canadian sub-arctic First Nations is a complex one. It involves interactions between aboriginal and

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[43] The final version of this collaboration can be found in The Oxford Companion Encyclopedia of Canadian History, 2003/4. Forthcoming at this time.

non-aboriginal peoples on several fronts; however following Asch (1986) it will be broken down into three general periods: The pre-contact period, the fur-trade period, and the recent history.

The pre-contact period is the longest. It has been fairly well documented that, from a western perspective, human habitation began in this area at least as long as 12 000 years before present (Dickason 2002: 17), with some archeologists arguing that the habitation may be far older than this as indicated by bone tools found in the Old Crow region—now part of Gwich'in country—which may be as old as 25 000 years (Wilson 1986: 237). Whatever the date, the First Nations of this area understand that as long as they have been who they are, they have lived in this area. In the late pre-contact period, which does not necessarily indicate what life was like in the early pre-contact period, life in the region was characterized by the dominance of groups of approximately twenty to thirty related persons which have been called in the past "bands." In order to maintain themselves economically, these groups relied on the harvesting of the many kinds of bush resources found throughout the region. The economy of the Northern Dene relied upon hunting, fishing and gathering of wild plants for food, clothing and shelter. Big game, such as moose, caribou, bears (black and grizzly), mountain sheep and woodland buffalo (in southern areas) were hunted along with small game, such as snowshoe hare, migratory waterfowl, beaver and muskrat which could be hunted or trapped using a variety of techniques and technologies; fish, such as whitefish, inconnu, herring, grayling, arctic char, salmon, and northern pike were extremely important in most areas; and the gathering of plant life, such as several species of berries, wood from spruce and birch, and some seasonal broad leafed plants provided food as well as fuel and medicine. While

some anthropological literature has often suggested that Dene society along with other hunter-gatherers was based solely on food production (Steward 1955, Service 1962), it is clear that socio-political factors arising out of the economy such as trade and political interaction between groups held a primary role in the manner in which they organized their social life.

The primary techniques used in collecting animal resources were snaring with babiche or sinew, and entrapment. Moose, caribou and other big-game animals were also hunted with bow and arrow, club, or spear when the prey were crossing water or open country. As can be ascertained from the conversation with Thomas Koe and Neil Colin there were other methods as well. Caribou hunting was often accomplished by driving groups of the animals into surrounds. This was accomplished by building two long fences that flared out from the mouth of the surround. The caribou would then be driven into this funnel. Elders in Fort McPherson talk about how the drive was accomplished by young, fast hunters running behind the caribou and imitating wolves. Once the caribou were in the surround, their exit was blocked and they could be speared or shot with arrows. In other areas, Gwich'in hunted caribou as they crossed rivers. The Vuntut Gwich'in of Old Crow have done this at certain spots on the Porcupine River for as long as anyone can remember. Fish were taken using fish nets made of woven willow bast or caribou babiche. Fish traps of various sorts were also constructed including fish wheels and fish weirs. Given these types of technologies, large-game capture and successful fishing often required co-operative labour in hunting parties. Co-operation was also important for women's production tasks that often produced a more reliable supply of foodstuffs such as berries and small game like hares, grouse and ptarmigan that could be snared. As can

be heard in the words of Neil Colin and Thomas Koe, there was considerable flexibility in what Darnell (1998) refers to as the accordion model of social organization. That is, there were times, probably occurring a few times a year, when "everyone get together." In the case of caribou hunting this seems to have been the predominant model at the beginning of the winter. It seems that all the people would get together in one of the valleys in the mountains and form what is often referred to as a "meat camp" (GRRB 1997: 27) where the caribou from the hunts would be processed communally, most of the meat would be dried, the bones boiled to get "bone grease" released from the marrow, and the prime fall hides would be worked and then later used for a variety of purposes.

Within local groups, bush resources were distributed on the basis of reciprocity or mutual sharing. Generally speaking, all participated equally in the good fortune of the hunters and all suffered equally when their luck turned bad. Thus, it was the whole membership of the local group and not each family or each individual that defined the self-sufficient unit. There is considerable evidence of trade between groups as well as trade on an inter-regional basis so these local groups should not be thought of as isolates.

The nature of leadership in such groups has long been an anthropological question. June Helm argues:

> In the coresidential hunt band there is no firm evidence that a "leader" had any really vital function in economic or other matters. The gaining of superior prestige-cum-status was an outcome of individual skills and endeavor. In a society where communal distribution of large game is a cardinal rule, a superior hunter was a good man to fall in with. If he was also a man of sound social judgments and techniques, his influence and following were so much the greater. But it is quite likely that in many hunt bands no adult male could be singled out as consistently exercising more influence and being accorded more deference than any other.
>
> [Helm 2000: 181]

This would seem to partially correspond to the evidence provided by oral history but it is far from the final word. Asch (1998) argues convincingly that we should not equate a band-like structure based on kinship with an apolitical system. Kinship as some have argued (i.e., Lévi-Strauss 1949, Asch 1988, 1998) is highly political and is often a flexible enough process to allow for substantial amounts of political action. When we are talking about the organization of larger hunting parties, leadership becomes even more necessary and it seems that leadership in these situations was determined from a combination of abilities to manipulate kin relationships and personal qualities such as those discussed by Thomas Koe and Neil Colin. Thomas' assertion that his great-grandfather was an eagle speaks not only to powerful beliefs among Gwich'in that their elders held tremendous powers but it is also a metaphor about leadership qualities. The ability to find or predict where caribou could be found was and continues to be important, hence the joke about how the new, elected chiefs should rent planes to look for them.

Caribou can tell us even more about how leadership worked during the pre-contact days. Gwich'in talk about caribou using many personifications and reflect their political system onto that of the great herds. Gwich'in talk about how the caribou like to live in small groups of related individuals during the winter time and again during the summer, but they all "get together" again in the fall and the spring. When the caribou get together Gwich'in talk about how they rely on certain "leaders" which are older, wiser caribou who have had many young ones to lead them over the mountains. The caribou that follow are said to do it out of respect, because they are related, and because they know the leaders will bring them to safe places where there is "lots of food." During the summer and early fall of 1998 Chief Johnny Charley Sr., a highly respected member of

the Fort McPherson community and much beloved leader was terminally ill with cancer. Many of the elders told me that the caribou would not pass until he did because the leaders of the caribou had respect. Indeed, the caribou did not pass until after he died.

The period of direct involvement in the fur trade occurs in different locations at different times. However, in all cases European goods were flowing into the area along aboriginal trade lines prior to European contact. In Gwich'in country Russian goods were coming in from the west in what is now Alaska and British and French goods were coming in from the east and the south. Alexander Mackenzie (1789-1793) who traveled through the heart of this area between the years 1789-1793, down the river that now bears his name and was arguably the first "white man" in the area, noted on several occasions that the Aboriginal people were already familiar with trade goods and were trading with their neighbors. However direct trade between Aboriginal people and Europeans in the lower Mackenzie did not begin until late in the 18th century and in Gwich'in territory it was not until quite a bit later. Elders have told me that in the old days people had to paddle way up the Mackenzie River to Fort Good Hope to trade. The Northwest Company established Fort Good Hope 1804 (Stager 1962: 40) at the confluence of the Mackenzie and the Hare Rivers. This location was far from convenient for the Gwich'in. It meant traveling at least 100 miles outside of their territory against the strong current of the Mackenzie, through the country of their neighbors who were not always fond of the fact that their middleman status was being uprooted by this action. As it turns out, most Gwich'in would not make this dangerous trip so in 1823 the Fort was moved about 100 miles up-river to the mouth of Trading River. According to Franklin (1828: 23) the Fort was established there for "the convenience of the tribe of Indians whom Mackenzie calls

the Quarrelers, but whom the traders throughout the fur country name the Loucheux." However, at this time the Gwich'in were not all that interested in trade for anything other than decorative beads that were, and still are, held in high regard. The company (by this time the Hudson's Bay Company had bought all of The Northwest Company's assets) therefore decided to move the fort back to original location in 1826 (Stager 1962: 41). The Northwest Company was first on the scene and maintained a near monopoly until 1821 when they were amalgamated with the Hudson's Bay Company. During the early years of the fur trade, availability of goods was severely restricted due to poor transportation and the aboriginal people maintained their reliance on bush products. Important items of trade tended to be of a decorative or luxury nature during this period, items most requested were things such as beads, blankets, metal pots, sugar, flour, and tea. The Gwich'in, particularly fond of beads that were used to decorate men's tunics and were indicative of his prowess in hunting and trapping, often refused to trade if beads (particularly large, white ones resembling dentalia) were lacking in quantity or quality (Hudson's Bay Company Archives B.80/a/7-12). In order to maximize the effectiveness of their side of the trade relationship the Gwich'in would often use a "trading chief" to represent them at the Fort. Not only did this allow them to reduce competition with one another when purchasing scarce goods, but it also seemed to fit well with the European's notion of the economic function of a chief (see Krech 1982). Most of the early trade from the aboriginal side was in bush resources such as meat and fish that were meant to sustain and provision the traders; with fur being of secondary importance. While opening these new trade routes was of primary importance to the Hudson's Bay Company and initial shortfalls in furs were expected as the company could not provision the forts themselves,

the continuation of this situation did not sit well with the company who were running a deficit in the Mackenzie District of approximately 1500 made beaver by 1830 (Hudson's Bay Company Archives B.200/d/27/3d). Governor George Simpson was particularly frustrated with this situation in his district, a district he was sent to make profitable. He argued that trade in beads should be done away with and the Gwich'in should be forced to trade in dry goods and metal works in exchange for furs alone, a situation which he understood as being more able to create dependency and thus larger profits as had been done in other areas under the company's control (Hudson's Bay Company Archives D.4/92). However, this situation did not change until the advent of steam ship travel on the major rivers of the sub-arctic in the late 19th century, which provided access to provisions from the south and now the traders could focus on the more profitable trade in furs (Tough 1996: 44).

In Gwich'in country, it was not until the establishment of Peel's River Post (later called Fort McPherson after Chief Factor Murdoch McPherson) in 1840 that direct trade between Gwich'in and Europeans even became a regularized activity. The Peel River was pretty much unknown to the traders until 1826 when Franklin (1828) accidentally went up the wrong channel when returning from the arctic coast. He traveled a short way up this river, and named it for Sir Robert Peel, then British Home Secretary. During this short trip he noted the favourable fur country and reported this back to the Hudson's Bay Company (Isbister 1845: 335). In 1837 Governor George Simpson read the report and sent an exploratory mission under Thomas Simpson who concurred with Franklin's report. In 1839 John Bell was sent from Fort Good Hope (during the first couple of years' records Peel's River Post is occasionally referred to as Fort Bell) to establish a satellite

trading post (Krech 1974: 33). He established the Fort 32 miles from the mouth of the Peel. The Gwich'in warned him that this place was not suitable—a place now called "old fort." After a few years of dealing with spring floods, the company took the Gwich'in's advice and it was moved four miles downstream to a place on high ground with a good view down the river, where it stands today. It was after the establishment of this Fort that the Gwich'in became regular participants in the fur trade and now traded furs for staples such as tea, flour, sugar, and tobacco; blankets and other western textiles; and guns, powder and shot.

The Hudson's Bay Company lost its monopoly with the sale of its territories in 1870. Competition and the new transportation system, as well as the Yukon gold rush of 1898 and the rise in fur prices during World War One, resulted in the complete transformation of the fur trade. The kinds of goods available changed greatly. Among the new items introduced by the turn of the century were the repeating rifle, the steel trap, wide varieties of Western clothing, and other luxury items. As well, the quantities of traditional exchange items such as food staples, blankets, and metal utensils increased dramatically. Speaking about this period of trade, Neil Colin pointed out that it used to be that there were only a couple of trading posts where people could get materials, but then suddenly there were "stores" opened up all over the place. Neil could remember fifteen places where such stores were set up within Teetl'it Gwich'in territory. These stores tended to be fairly ephemeral. They would open up in places close to where the Gwich'in would congregate during the summer fishing season but then shut down when the people would leave those places.

The new-found independence of traders affected exchange relationships between traders and aboriginal people and opened the north to less scrupulous traders who exchanged furs for alcohol, the whiskey traders. The First Nations still traded local resources, but whereas in the earlier period either provisions or furs could be used in exchange, now the Bay and the free traders alike manipulated exchange rates to encourage trade in furs. Indeed, the Hudson's Bay Company subsidized the price of importing food-stuffs in order to allow First Nations to focus more of their time on hunting for furs rather than game and the treaty supplies and relief from the Department of Indian Affairs was, as Tough (1996: 17) argues, an early policy not of sustaining the First Nations, but rather of sustaining the fur industry. The effect was one where the Dene economy was still largely based in bush life, but there were shifts in residency patterns, hunting patterns, and an increased focus on the trapping of fur-bearing animals.

In Teetl'it Gwich'in country this period of trade in the late 1800's was marked by three general shifts. There was a shift by some to focus more on trapping the upland furbearers such as martin, there was a shift by some to what Krech (1974: 48) refers to as a "downriver orientation" to hunt and trap the plentiful aquatic rodents, primarily muskrats but also beaver in the Mackenzie Delta, and finally the goldrush interlude of the late 1890's ,during which many Gwich'in decided to provision the many hungry mouths of Dawson City with wild sources of meat instead of trapping for furs (Slobodin 1963). Each of these shifts are fairly fluid with individuals making rational decisions as to which strategy to take up according to maintaining their own patterns of economic behaviour on the land and to maximizing their returns in trade materials.

Recent history has been marked by the collapse of the fur trade following World War I, the advent of government interventions, the coming of new industries to the north, and new political relationships to the state.

The high price of furs during the early part of the 20th century led to an ever-increasing reliance on trade goods amongst the aboriginal peoples of this area. Despite this reliance, they continued to make their living from the bush. However, these increasing prices for fur lead to an influx of European trappers and settlers into the area and new competition for land bases was created. Now the stability and success of the economy was dependent in large measure both on external economic conditions, such as a high market price for furs in relation to trade good prices, and locally on the availability of a productive surplus in one resource, furs. The focus on furs led to chronic problems, and after the influx of Europeans into the north during the 1920s, a period when many returning soldiers of World War I headed north and took up trapping as an economic activity, it almost led to the collapse of the economy. On the other hand, the relation between price for furs and trade good prices remained fairly constant prior to World War I. Yet, ultimately, it was this factor and not fur production itself that led to the collapse of the fur trade economy when, beginning after World War II and lasting at least through the Korean War, there was a long depression in the value of furs and an astronomical rise in the prices of trade goods.

In the years immediately following World War II, the Northern Dene, by and large, hoped that fur prices would soon rise again and the fur trade economy would continue as before. In the meantime, the general introduction of family allowance and old age pension payments during the late 1940s enabled most people to maintain the same

economic focus on fur hunting as during the fur-trade era. By the 1950s it was apparent that the boom of the fur trade would never return. The Federal government, rather than bringing in price supports and other factors to support the economy assumed that the collapse of the fur industry meant the loss of a way of life (Tough 1996: 228). As a consequence, they encouraged and coerced Dene to move into towns where the children would be able to attend schools and then be in a position to take jobs rather than become hunters and trappers, however, this program was not successful. There were few jobs and the government made a huge error in concluding that Dene had lost their way of life—a view of culture loss backed by the anthropology of Steward and others—because of the fact that most Dene now lived in towns rather than in their bush communities. However, living in towns with little income to support these capitalist structures, many communities have become reliant on welfare and transfer payments to maintain the town life aspect of the economy. It is an issue that continues to be a central concern as direct government payments have replaced labour as a main method for obtaining trade goods. This is also an aspect that does not go unnoticed by Gwich'in elders. During a conversation that Ara Murray and I had with Bertha Francis about timber resources, Bertha commented that when the government was building houses within the town many elders refused them initially and warned others to do the same:

> Bertha: My elders told me, "don't take that house, stay in one that you build yourself. If you take that house then you have to take their water, take their fuel, pay with their money, pretty soon eat their food. If you stay in your house then you have to go get your own water, go out and cut wood, get everything yourself, you know meat, fish and berries. This means your kids got to do that too and they will be OK."

Bertha took their advice and maintains that it has been a positive choice for her and her family. However, many Dene did not have a choice and, as a consequence, a pattern has

arisen in the relationship between Native people and external agents— both governmental and business — during the past few decades, a relationship best described as a massive intrusion of southern Canadian institutions, values, and powerful personnel into the ongoing social and economic processes of Native society. Many traditional aboriginal institutions and values have been put under tremendous strain, and this strain contributes to social problems such as alcoholism, poor housing, high welfare rates, health problems, and increased crime. But again this does not equate with a loss in way of life or a culture of poverty (Asch 1993: 20).

The contemporary political landscape in the western sub-arctic is dominated by continuing attempts to resolve political relations between the Dene and Canada. This is a daunting task, made more difficult by recent political developments in the north and particularly the dividing of authority between local, territorial, and federal jurisdictions. Further, given the fluid nature of political developments, Dene are finding that they need to negotiate with respect to virtually every aspect of their lives.

The history of the Dene Nation in the period from 1970 to 1990 provides an apt illustration of the difficulties involved in negotiations. The "Dene Nation" was organized in 1970 to represent the Dene in resolving many outstanding land and governance issues with the Government of Canada. The organization developed in particular as a response to long-standing concerns over the written terms found in the federal government's version of Treaties 8 and 11 negotiated with the Dene in 1899-1900 and 1921-22, respectively. The Dene, as articulated by the Dene Nation, consistently held that these treaties established a nation-to-nation political relationship between themselves and the Canadian State—a view that was consistent with the wording on self-determination in the

Dene Declaration of Nationhood (1975), in the Preamble to a Proposed Agreement-in-Principle (1976) and in evidence given at the Berger hearings on a proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline (1975-77). For example an excerpt from the Dene Declaration states:

> We the Dene of the Northwest Territories insist on the right to be regarded by ourselves and the world as a nation. Our struggle is for the recognition of the Dene Nation by the Government and peoples of Canada and the peoples and governments of the world.
>
> As once Europe was the exclusive homeland of the European peoples, Africa the exclusive homeland of the African peoples, the New World, North and South America, was the exclusive homeland of Aboriginal peoples of the New World, the Amerindian and the Inuit.
>
> The New World like other parts of the world has suffered the experience of colonialism and imperialism. Other peoples have occupied the land - often with force - and foreign governments have imposed themselves on our people. Ancient civilizations and ways of life have been destroyed.
>
> Colonialism and imperialism are now dead or dying. Recent years have witnessed the birth of new nations or rebirth of old nations out of the ashes of colonialism.
>
> As Europe is the place where you will find European countries with European governments for European peoples, now also you will find in Africa and Asia the existence of African and Asian countries with African and Asian governments for the African and Asian peoples.
>
> The African and Asian peoples - the peoples of the Third World - have fought for and won the right to self- determination, the right to recognition as distinct peoples and the recognition of themselves as nations.
>
> But in the New World the Native peoples have not fared so well. Even in countries in South America where the Native peoples are the vast majority of the population there in not one country that has an Amerindian government for the Amerindian peoples.
>
> Nowhere in the New World have the Native peoples won the right to self-determination and the right to recognition by the world as a distinct people and as Nations.
>
> While the Native people of Canada are a minority in their homeland, the Native people of the Northwest Territories, the Dene and the Inuit, are a majority of the population of the Northwest Territories.

> The Dene find themselves as part of a country. That country is Canada. But the Government of Canada is not the Government of the Dene. The Government of the Northwest Territories is not the Government of the Dene. These governments were not the choice of the Dene, they were imposed upon the Dene.
>
> [Dene Nation 1975]

The Canadian Government largely refused to listen to such an idea. In 1981, The Government of Canada Agreed to open negotiations with the Dene. However, they asserted that fundamental political issues had been resolved in the treaties, for according to written terms, the Dene had extinguished these rights. Thus, they insisted on focusing in negotiations on non-political matters. Given the actual political circumstances, negotiations in this period largely avoided issues of fundamental political relations. This came to a head when, in 1990, The Dene National Assembly passed a resolution affirming that resolving fundamental political relations lay at the heart of the Dene Nation's motivation for negotiating with the Federal Government. At this point, the Federal Government suspended negotiations with the Dene Nation and moved to negotiate regional agreements more compatible with their position. It was a move that fragmented Dene political solidarity. The impasse concerning general political relationships between the Dene as a whole and Canada has yet to be resolved; however, in terms of Gwich'in economic history the regional claims process has created a new legal landscape in which Gwich'in must now practice their economic activities.

Current Legal Landscape:

In Gwich'in country the actions of the Government of Canada resulted in a regional comprehensive settlement in 1992 creating a legal landscape referred to as "The Gwich'in Settlement Area." On April 22, 1992 the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim

Agreement was signed by the Gwich'in Tribal Council, the Canadian Government and the Government of the Northwest Territories. The passing of the Gwich'in Land Claim Settlement Act on December 22, 1992 then enforced this agreement. This land claim created a 56, 935 square kilometer area in the Northwest Territories that includes the lower Mackenzie River, part of the Peel River and the Arctic Red River watershed called the Gwich'in Settlement Area. The Gwich'in Settlement Area should not be confused with the Gwich'in Settlement Region that includes the GSA in the Northwest Territories and an area in the Yukon where Gwich'in who reside in the Northwest Territories have user rights to natural resources.

According to Elders and people involved in the political process during the 1980's and 1990's that I have talked to, the Gwich'in were originally fighting alongside of other Dene for a politically unified claim to nationhood. However, there were a variety of issues that led them to split from this process and settle on their own. As mentioned above, the Canadian government forced the issue and split the camps in order to fulfill their own political goals. The Gwich'in were also feeling tremendous pressure to settle their claims quickly as their people were becoming second-class citizens on their own land. The Inuvialuit were already settling with the governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada, which placed the Gwich'in in a precarious position regarding rights of access to resources.

The legal landscape created by the formation of the GSA was considered to be necessary by the Gwich'in Tribal Council in order to better manage Gwich'in land for the benefit of the Gwich'in people. Prior to its formation both Gwich'in and non-Gwich'in had the same general rights of access and had to comply with the same Federal and

Territorial laws. Furthermore, the Gwich'in were well aware that the Inuvialuit who also use some of the same land base were in a far better position than they were regarding access to natural resources and fiduciary benefits. Gwich'in people therefore remained in a situation where they were committing criminal acts when they tried to maintain their traditional practices—many of which were the same as those of the other Native people in the area, on what they considered to be their land. While this legal landscape is not the traditional model, it does in effect aid in regulating non-Gwich'in impacts and aims at preserving "an identity," which relies on Gwich'in people maintaining ties to the land.[44]

Beneficiaries of the land claim have the legal right to access all the land in the GSA for the purposes of subsistence activities, i.e., they may hunt, fish, trap and harvest forest products for personal use (Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement 1992, Appendix C: 48). If one of these beneficiaries wishes to conduct any sort of commercial activities then he/she must first ascertain if the land involved is Gwich'in Private Land or Crown Land. Gwich'in Private Land composes approximately 40% of the land in the GSA, which is made up of 53 parcels of which 33 have only surface rights and 20 include subsurface rights. If the land in question is Gwich'in Private Land then the beneficiary must first contact the Gwich'in Land Administration for approval. If the land in question is located on the 60% of the GSA that has remained Crown Lands, then the beneficiary must contact the Gwich'in Land and Water Board for approval.

Those who are not beneficiaries must comply with all Federal and Territorial laws governing access to Crown Lands. On Gwich'in Private Land, they must contact an agent

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[44]Thanks are owed to the Gwich'in Tribal Council for providing the information on the legal landscape of the GSA.

of the Gwich'in Tribal Council for details concerning access other than for casual use of waterfront lands, i.e., canoeing, sport-fishing, hiking, etc. An agent of the Tribal Council includes the Gwich'in Land Administration and Community Renewable Resource Councils located in Fort McPherson, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic and Inuvik. The Gwich'in Land Administration is the organization that regulates research and forestry activities on Gwich'in Private Lands.

In addition, there are two other research bodies in the settlement region. The first is the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board located in Inuvik which is a co-management board answering to the Gwich'in government, the NWT government and the government of Canada. Their mandate is the management of renewable resources within the GSA. In order to accomplish this objective they sponsor relevant biological research and impact studies. They also have a traditional knowledge research component that is designed to gather information from the Gwich'in and to facilitate communication between the federal and Gwich'in governments. The GRRB is not a designated Gwich'in organization. The second facility is the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute and it is a designated Gwich'in organization located in Tsiigehtchic with an additional research office in Yellowknife. The GSCI has as a mandate to address the Gwich'in concerns at the time of the signing of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement about the erosion of language and culture. They are a non-profit organization with a board of directors who represent the four communities in the GSA and their objectives are as follows:

> The primary objective of the Institute is to conduct social and cultural research, and to provide programming in these areas for the benefit of Gwich'in land claim beneficiaries. An important part of our mandate is to document Gwich'in heritage and traditional knowledge, so that we can

> develop cultural, educational and social programs that meet our needs. We believe that this is essential in building a new awareness and pride in Gwich'in culture, and will contribute to the social well-being of all individuals within the Gwich'in Nation.
>
> [GSCI 1996:3]

The Gwich'in Nation is divided into geographic regions in Alaska, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories and each has different rights to territory and subsistence harvesting. In Alaska the Gwich'in decided not to sign the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 that extinguished any aboriginal rights (including hunting and fishing) and replaced these claims with a cash settlement and a set of corporate titles that were to be in place until a review was to take place in 1991. However, Congress in 1987 amended these corporate claims and extended their tenure indefinitely (Morehouse 1988:6). The Gwich'in in Alaska therefore still maintain their original claim to territory and their aboriginal rights to hunt and fish. However, according to the Alaska government, the Gwich'in are held to the conventions of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 which somewhat remedied the lack of subsistence clauses in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act by giving Native people a "rural resident" subsistence right and a voice in the construction of any new hunting and fishing regulations (Morehouse 1988:6). At the present time those Gwich'in living outside of Alaska who may have traditional hunting territories within that State have no aboriginal rights to hunt within the State (Childers and Kancewick nd: 14).

In the Yukon, the Vuntut Gwich'in have a Final Agreement with Canada which was signed in 1995 and sets aside lands for their traditional uses and for protection by the Vuntut Gwich'in. Any member from another First Nation must get written permission to harvest renewable resources from these lands. However, overlaps exist with the Teetl'it

Gwich'in to the east, who have always maintained traditional trapping and hunting areas within parts of the Yukon.[45]

The Dene and The Pipeline[46]

As mentioned in a few places above, there have been considerable industrial interests in the 1960's and 1970's to develop the hydrocarbon industries in Canada's North. Interest waned during the 1980's, but arose again during the 1990's and has become a contentious issue once again.[47] At the same time that the Dene were organizing themselves politically in the mid 1970's, the Berger Inquiry (1975-1977) was being held to determine the impacts of a proposed natural gas pipeline to be built up the Mackenzie River. Berger determined that the Dene and the Inuvialuit were not guaranteed a fair voice in development due to the unresolved status of their various claims and assurances had to be guaranteed to them for not only jobs but also cultural maintenance issues. Berger therefore ruled that a ten-year moratorium on construction would be appropriate so that the various claims could be settled. It has now been a quarter of a century since Volume One of the Berger Report was tabled in the House of Commons recommending a ten-year moratorium on the construction of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. One of the reasons for this moratorium was to allow the First Nations who live in the area of the proposed pipeline to settle outstanding land issues (often called 'land claims') with the Federal and Territorial governments. Since then, three comprehensive agreements have been reached: the Inuvialuit in 1984, the Gwich'in in 1992, and the Sahtu Dene and Metis

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[45] If one looks at the life stories of many of the eldest members of the Teetl'it Gwich'in one is struck by the fact that many of them were born on the land somewhere within the Yukon, and according to many elders this is due to the fact that many of the Teetl'it Gwich'in used to spend a large portion of each year either hunting caribou in the mountains or trapping and fishing up the Peel in the Yukon.

[46] For a more detailed history of the pipeline and Dene responses see Asch with Wishart (2003)

[47] Although not nearly as contentious as during the 1970's when the political climate seemed to be different than today. Michael Asch and I are currently discussing a future investigation into this shift in popular opinion.

in 1993. To this date, one 'land claim' along the proposed Mackenzie Valley route remains unsettled: that of the Deh Cho.[48] Despite the fact that one claim remains unsettled there is renewed pressure on First Nations in the region to approve pipeline development. This pressure has three intermingling sources.

First, there is a recent sense of an energy crisis in North America which is being fueled by high demand for oil and gas, increasing prices for these products, a dwindling supply of petroleum based energy sources in the United States, and a growing distrust of the availability of foreign supplies. These circumstances have lead to considerable economic and political pressure on all the governments in Canada to exploit non-renewable energy resources (Mitander 2001:1-2).

Second, there is competition between four potential pipeline routes proposed by several petroleum companies in 1999 for delivering natural gas to southern markets. Of these four routes, two are being taken most seriously. One along the Mackenzie Valley estimated to cost about 3 billion Canadian dollars to build and the other along the Alaska Highway would cost 6.5 billion dollars to build but could potentially be constructed faster because it follows a route with a pre-existing highway. Both of these routes have often been referred to as "stand-alone," meaning that either one or the other will be built, but not both. This competition placed considerable pressure on the First Nations of both of these regions to approve proposals quickly (Crump 2001:2). It seems that industry has caught on to the "divide and conquer" mentality formulated by the Canadian State when

[48] The Deh Cho First Nation is a political body that represents several Dene and Metis First Nations found in the Deh Cho region. The Deh Cho is located in the region surrounding the headwaters of the Mackenzie River. The Deh Cho members include: Acho Dene Koe (Fort Liard NWT), Deh Gah Gotie First Nation (Fort Providence, NWT), K'a'agee Tu First Nation (Kakisa NWT), Katl'Odeeche First Nation (Hay River Reserve, NWT), Liidlii Kue First Nation (Fort Simpson, NWT), N'ah adehe First Nation (Nahanni Butte NWT), Pehdzeh Ki First Nation (Wrigley NWT), Sambaa K'e First Nation (Trout Lake NWT), Ts'uehda First Nation (West Point NWT), The'K'ehdeli First Nation (Jean Marie River NWT), Fort Liard Metis Nation, Fort Providence Metis Nation, Fort Simpson Metis Nation.

dealing with the Dene. The Dene are thus trapped by the agents of development who are playing with very high stakes.

The third pressure arises out of the continued decline in demand and price for renewable resource products, especially for fur. Despite these declines, continuing to practice traditional hunting, fishing, and trapping is described by Elders and younger generations as being of prime importance. There are many reasons for this concern with the continuity of tradition which will be explored throughout the rest of this thesis; however, of relevance here is the economic importance of wild foods to the local diet and the importance of money brought in from the fur trade for purchasing goods. As in the time of the Berger Inquiry, in many of these communities, bought foods are expensive due to the high cost of shipping goods to remote areas, and the availability of fresh foods is severely limited. Therefore, people who live in these areas still depend on wild foods[49] and on the money received in exchange for furs to purchase expensive goods— many of which are used for hunting and fishing. Despite this continued reliance on hunting, fishing, and trapping there has been a recent reiteration of the message that trapping can not provide a sufficient cash income to meet the local demand for imported goods and services (e.g., Barrera 2001). One of the ramifications of this drop in outside demand for non-renewable products is the pressure on First Nations Governments to create jobs, and the extraction and delivery of non-renewable resources such as oil, gas, and diamonds is seen by many (e.g., Antoine 2001), but certainly not all, as an answer to the problem of the severe fluctuations and overall historic decline in the relative price of furs.

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[49] Analyses of the continuing importance of "country food" in this area are clear on the fact that these foods are still consumed on a daily basis (e.g., Usher 1976a, Wein and Sabrey 1988). My own recent experience in the community of Fort McPherson (a Gwich'in community) concurs with these analyses.

These pressures lead to the coming together of the leaders and representatives of twenty-six First Nations in the Northwest Territories to sign a Memorandum of Understanding at a meeting held in Fort Simpson in June 2000. The Deh Cho leaders were hesitant to sign because of concerns over a lack of consultation with elders but signed in the end with the understanding that it was a document which did not commit them to building a pipeline, but rather that it was an agreement to investigate the maximization of ownership and benefits and the drafting of a business plan. This collection of leaders and representatives became known as the 'Aboriginal Pipeline Group.' Friction between the leaders of the Deh Cho and other signatories was then created when the Premier of the Northwest Territories, Stephen Kakfwi, and some of the other members of the Aboriginal Pipeline Group declared that they had a mandate to negotiate the building of a pipeline. The Deh Cho members did not feel that this was what they had signed onto. The Deh Cho then refused to sign any of the other Memorandums of Understanding presented by the Aboriginal Pipeline Working Group and they did not sign a Memorandum of Understanding on October 15, 2001 with the other members of the Aboriginal Pipeline Group and Imperial Oil, ExxonMobil, Shell Oil, and Conoco (known as the Mackenzie Valley Producers), agreeing that the aboriginal members (under the umbrella of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Corporation) would have one-third ownership of the proposed pipeline. The proposed pipeline would ship approximately one billion cubic feet of gas per day to southern markets. It is estimated by the Mackenzie Valley Producers that there is 5.8 trillion cubic feet of sweet gas under the Mackenzie Delta. The Mackenzie Valley Producers and the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Corporation began the regulatory application process in January 2002.

This process along with the "definition phase" is expected to take four years (Opportunities North 2001).

Many members of the Deh Cho First Nation initially removed themselves from the Aboriginal Pipeline Group and the Sahtu, who were considering a proposal from Houston - based Arctic Resources which would allow for 100% aboriginal ownership of the pipeline, withdrew their signature. The Deh Cho First Nation have objected to signing any agreements to build a pipeline until they have the same assurances as the other First Nations who have settled on the basis of the Comprehensive Land Claims policy. It is their view that they do not need a process in which they are to "claim" land that is already theirs and should not extinguish their treaty rights in what they consider to be 'land sales' (Nadli 2001:14). In their negotiations with government, they are foregrounding recognition of their political rights, such as the right to self-government. In contrast, negotiations between governments and the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in, and the Sahtu Dene and Metis has resulted in an agreement whereby for the extinguishment of certain treaty rights, the indigenous parties have private ownership over blocks of land, as a consequence, Corporations must seek their approval for any development which affects these lands. The Deh Cho First Nation sought an interim resource development agreement with the Governments, which would give them a similar power to block such developments until a final agreement can be made. The Federal Government has been hesitant to negotiate such a deal outside of the terms of a regional, comprehensive land claim. In November 2002 the Deh Cho signed an agreement with the Canadian Government over land management that essentially gives them similar powers as those who signed the regional claims. The Deh Cho have now re-partnered with the other

aboriginal members and have agreed to sign a Mackenzie Valley Pipeline deal. As of this writing, it appears that the pipeline will now proceed. The impacts of this deal will soon become apparent.

Summary and Conclusion

The economic history of the Teetl'it Gwich'in has often been used as evidence for two interconnected external constructions of who they are. First they have been described as existing in what can be reduced to an image of near or absolute pre-social existence. Second they have been described as having lost their aboriginal culture due to the economic and political infiltration of European society, and now live as assimilated peoples. These two images arise out of much scholarly and popular theorizing rooted in social-evolutionist discourse. These are images and arguments that Native people throughout the world have tried very hard to resist and dispose of; however, they remain powerful, albeit poorly evidenced arguments. Michael Asch (1979) and Frank Tough (1996) have argued that in order to properly dispose of these ideas, histories and descriptions of economic activities have to be presented in new thoughtful ways that transcend the ecological-evolutionary model and describe economics as relationships between historical conditions and modes of production. If we analyze European economies using models born out of a history of rationality we should be equally able to approach other economies in the same way. By doing so we can transcend the argument that people live unconscious lives reacting simply to the ecological conditions in which they find themselves and we can begin to delve deeper into the conditions which people have had to make rational choices about. We can leave behind the image of the Dene as presented by Elman Service in 1962 and reiterated by him in the revised second edition

of his book in 1971(Service 1971: 77) as a "refugee-like people" whose primitive form of social organization disintegrated more than 200 years ago because they became the "debt-peons" of the fur trading companies. The Gwich'in, like all aboriginal people, have of course come face to face with terribly difficult choices arising out of the conditions of capitalistic colonization, but the Gwich'in have maintained a hunting culture despite the fact that initially it was thought that the Man the Hunter conference of 1966 ended up as an exercise in "writing an obituary on the hunters" (Richard Lee 1978:30, cited in Asch 1982: 347). As Thomas Koe explained to me and as has been demonstrated by many elders and younger people, "that stuff—nothing new."

Indeed there is nothing new about how Gwich'in live their lives and the choices that they make. There are only new situations. However, even these new situations are not considered by Gwich'in elders to be anything really new; just new examples of types of things they have had to deal with for a long time. There are certainly new features of people's lives from generation to another, but these features tend to get categorized into examples within the situations. In the next two chapters I will present one of the situations the Gwich'in have been faced with: that of the history of wildlife management regimes in Northern Canada and the ways that current situations and local concerns with wildlife management arose out of the economic over-determination of the Gwich'in, a history portraying them as living in nature or as a part of a wilderness that needed to be civilized.

Chapter Four
Wildlife Management, The Teetl'it Gwich'in and The Colonization of Consciousness

Many times during my fieldwork and during the times I spent back in southern Canada I was asked by wildlife biologists, forest ecologists, hunting and fishing enthusiasts, hikers and mountain bikers, and many others who have taken an interest in "conservation of wild places and species," why it is that First Nations people do not seem to want to follow the rules that everyone else must follow in regards to these places and species?

The questions, of course, were never put exactly that way; often when the question came from wildlife biologists it was accompanied by a statement that the First Nations people are somehow distrustful of the expert opinion of their science. "We are just trying to make sure there is enough for the future for everyone," is a common statement I have heard. When the comments have come from hunting and fishing enthusiasts they have usually not been as kind and often involve elements of a discourse that I would characterize as racist, albeit not always intentionally so. A general idea that emerges from this discourse is that Canada has developed a complex system for maintaining its wild places and animal and plant life, and that all must follow its general rules for this system to work properly. There is currently debate amongst the members of these groups as to whether Canada, the Provinces and Territories have gone far enough in their protection of these elements, but little emphasis is placed by these groups on how the system imposed by the regulatory bodies in Canada works in relation to the history of First Nations people, especially with respect to their relations with the colonialist efforts of settler states prior to confederation, and the ongoing colonization of the north by the Canadian State.

There are multitudes of overlapping government bodies and agencies involved in the management of "wildlife" in Canada and depending upon the species in question differing agencies may become involved in its management. A brief overview of the departments and agencies is warranted. The largest and most powerful agency is Environment Canada, a department answering to the Minister of the Environment who oversees issues related to the department's mandate:

> Environment Canada's mandate is to preserve and enhance the quality of the natural environment, including water, air and soil quality; conserve Canada's renewable resources, including migratory birds and other non-domestic flora and fauna; conserve and protect Canada's water resources; carry out meteorology; enforce the rules made by the Canada - United States International Joint Commission relating to boundary waters; and coordinate environmental policies and programs for the federal government."
>
> [Environment Canada 2003a]

Environment Canada fulfills its mandate in accordance to its main regulatory act, the Canada Wildlife Act which:

> ...provides the authority for the acquisition of lands by the Minister of the Environment for the purposes of wildlife research, conservation, and interpretation. The Act also provides for the establishment of protected marine areas. The Minister may enter into an agreement with any province for wildlife research, conservation, and interpretation, including measures to protect any wildlife in danger of extinction. National Wildlife Areas are created and managed pursuant to regulations made under this act. Designation as a National Wildlife Area helps ensure that lands of national importance are protected.
>
> [Environment Canada 2003b]

Under the Canadian Wildlife Act, much of the research and regulatory work for the Canadian Government is performed by the Canadian Wildlife Service which with provincial and territorial partners undertakes research to determine species at risk, manages the hunting of migratory waterfowl and fishing in national wildlife areas

(Canadian Wildlife Service 2003a). The division of power between the Federal and Provincial/Territorial departments is one where:

> The management of wildlife in Canada is shared by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. The Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada handles wildlife matters that are the responsibility of the federal government. These include protection and management of migratory birds as well as nationally significant wildlife habitat. Other responsibilities are endangered species, control of international trade in endangered species, research on wildlife issues of national importance, and international wildlife treaties and issues. As part of its responsibility to manage migratory birds, the Canadian Wildlife Service consults with provinces and territories and issues annual migratory game bird hunting regulations.
>
> By and large, provincial and territorial wildlife agencies are responsible for all other wildlife matters. These include conservation and management of wildlife populations and habitat within their borders, issuing licenses and permits for fishing, game hunting, and trapping, and guidelines for safe angling and trapping.
>
> [Canadian Wildlife Service 2003b]

It is in accordance with these general rules and ideas of management that many who continue to argue for assimilative policies have argued First Nations must comply (e.g., Smith 1995).[50]

In his seminal text on the history of European and later Canadian colonial efforts to conquer the north and civilize the people living there, Kenneth Coates (1985: 123) in Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories, points to the fact that in the early twentieth century the federal government of Canada made a series of decisions regarding the "management" of First Nations people living above the 60th parallel which contradicted the underlying assimilative tone of the Indian Act. Coates argues that the federal government, under pressures to manage costs in the Department of Indian Affairs, made the policy decision that the First Nations of this northern region

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[50] For a good overview of the contemporary arguments for assimilationist policy and wildlife management in Ontario see Anti-Racist-Action-Toronto (2003).

were, for the time being, "best left as Indians" (1985: 123-124). This was an opinion that was greatly desired by the fur traders who wished to maintain a constant supply of furs at the trading posts throughout the north; however, this decision angered many other people, among them the missionaries of the churches actively proselytizing in the north. Missionaries felt that their efforts were hindered by the fact that if the people were "best left as Indians," this meant that they would be able to maintain their hunting and gathering traditions and stay out in the "bush," out of the missionaries' main sphere of influence—the settlements—for much of the yearly cycle. The missionaries, and many lay people as well felt that the government's decision was made not for the betterment of Canada and "the civilized world," but rather to save some precious tax dollars (1985: 125). The Department of Indian Affairs was forced to come to a compromise between their desire to save money and maintain the lucrative fur trade which depended upon First Nation participation, and the larger mission of their office which was to support the assimilation of the Native peoples of Canada into the "Canadian way of life" through actions of "coercive tutelage" (Dyck 1991: 3, see also Honigmann and Honigmann 1965 and the collected works in Paine 1971, 1977). The Federal Government struck an unfortunate compromise by supporting efforts to develop a residential school system for the children and youth while trying to keep the adults out on the trap line.

The late 1800's and early 1900's in the history of the northern regions of Canada speaks to many ideas and efforts of the colonialists in Canada's north. Coates argues: "[e]vidence exists to support the notion that, as colonies, the territories have been developed according to the needs of the south and that native and non-native northerners have had little to say in their region's evolution" (1985: 12). I would suggest that there

has been a constant, although not necessarily systematic and uncontradictory, effort to alter the north according to the ideas of the colonisers and part of this action is to deny a voice to the people living there.

A denial of voices and efforts to control and manipulate the lifeways, and therefore the actions, thoughts, and landscape of the aboriginal inhabitants within this massive region was well underway. I will demonstrate the impacts of this policy on the people of one small area in the north where I spent time and learned about the problems that arose out of these policies from Gwich'in elders.

More recent in the history of the north have been the impacts of Government imposed wildlife management regimes. In a discussion paper prepared for the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee over twenty years ago, Peter Usher argued that:

> Wildlife biologists and managers often like to see themselves and their work as divorced from the political process. "We are responsible for resource management, not social programs," "politics should be kept out of resource management," "resource management is a scientific problem," are ideas that are expressed one way or another by many employees of public fish and wildlife administrations. Many research biologists in the university and private sectors, and indeed by many hunters 'and anglers' organizations and their members share these sentiments.
>
> [Usher 1979: 20]

Usher goes on to argue that there are "a number of sociological reasons why managers and biologists hold these views, among them their status as professionals and their training as scientists" (1979:20). However, while the divorce between science, management and politics may exist in the minds of the people practicing these regimes, Usher is careful to note that "management" is based on the idea of scarcity and that scarcity has tremendous "political significance." On the surface, the concept of scarcity is tied directly to the allocation of scarce resources, which of course involves highly

political decision-making. At a deeper level, it is important to recognise how the culturally constructed idea of scarcity is tied to a colonialist viewpoint and the historic processes of social and economic alteration of pre-existing aboriginal landscapes. Biologists and managers may draw other conclusions about why it is that First Nations' people seem to distrust their opinions, but largely because the biologists or managers are the last in a long line of people who have been telling First Nations what to do with their land, and how First Nations should perceive it. Furthermore, because the biologists often have direct contact in the field in face-to-face relations, they are the ones who get to hear of the cumulative effects of a long line of officials who have told First Nations what to do, and have of course attempted to regulate First Nations behaviour on a micro-scale. Unfortunately the history of these efforts is not often held in mind in these situations and researchers may just come to the conclusion that the people are "hard to work with." It is a history that Robert Paine (1977: xi) argues has severely damaged the relationship between these two parties.

By sorting out how colonial enterprises have worked in other places in the world and by relating these actions to a general theory on the colonisation of consciousness as developed by Jean and John Comaroff, I propose to work through how the "management of wildlife" has always been entwined in this historical colonial process of the outsider definition of a particular people, the Teetl'it Gwich'in and their place in the world.

The Comaroffs have written extensively (e.g., 1991, 1992, 1997) on the encounter between missionaries and southern Africans. The example of southern Africa's colonial experience shares many basic general features with colonialism in other areas—features which relate to the impact of European capitalism "in its many guises" (1992: 235) with

pre-existing social and political systems. In both the case of capitalism and that of the pre-existing aboriginal habitus[51] in question there is a tie between economic, social, and the religious cultural entities. These complex interlinkages mean that a colonial effort must take into consideration multiple challenges to the pre-existing way of life. These many challenges—much like the challenge presented by Usher with regard to wildlife management—are labeled by the Comaroffs as a "politics of" and they speak of the politics of social, economic, linguistic, and religious forms throughout their work.

The Comaroffs stress that colonialism is a process that requires the alteration of pre-existing lifeways and that military or other physical forms of coercion are never enough to accomplish this goal. As important as the physical attempts at coercion are to the success of the colonial encounter, so are the many more subtle and often more powerful attempts coercion by semantics:

> Colonizers in most places and at most times try to gain control over both the material and semantic practices through which their would-be subjects produce and reproduce the very bases of their existence; no habit being too humble, no sign too insignificant to be implicated in the battle. And colonization everywhere gives rise to struggles – albeit often tragically unequal ones—over power and meaning on the moving frontiers of the empire.
>
> [Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 236]

Creating an "Empire of the Spirit" (ibid: 238) thus requires the control of the material and the spiritual elements of society. This requires two steps: The first is that of conversion, in which the coloniser attempts by many means to convince the aboriginal of their authority, the superiority of the new systems, and second, through the *attempt* at complete reformation of the would-be colony in the image of the empire (1992: 238).

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[51] The Comaroff's base many of their ideas about the colonial process on Bourdieu's (1977: 12) notion of challenge.

I stress that in an outsider attempt to reform a society, resistance continues by those who are being colonised in multiple, novel, and enduring ways. Challenges to the lifeways of those being colonised are also multiple, however ready compliance is not the general result. Among the colonial agents, there is, indeed, often a gross misunderstanding of the affects of their own action. This is not to say that there have not been overt attempts made at conversion and reformation—our history books are full of them and I will present some examples with regards to wildlife management later in the chapter, it is just that often the colonial forces do not even consider themselves to be "agents" in the first place. The Comaroffs point out that in southern Africa the British missionaries were not always cognisant of the fact that they were reforming the land and the people into a colony of the political body known as the British Empire; they were there ostensibly to spread the word of God but did not see how this was directly connected to capitalistic enterprise (1992: 258-259) any more than the average working man in America considers The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism when thinking about the work and words of Benjamin Franklin (Weber 1958: 47-56). Just as wildlife biologists, as Usher points out, might consider themselves to be pure, apolitical scientists doing good for all of human-kind through their actions, so are they agents willing or not in the process of attempted reform.

The Comaroffs point out that alongside the politics of trying to overtly convert the "savage" to new religions in southern Africa, British missionaries were also bent on destroying the local economic habitus through the reconstruction of the landscape in the image of agriculture, which they believed to be divinely ordained. They taught, and of course were themselves taught, that God favoured farmers, and one of the first things the

converted should do was take up the methods of agriculture known to the missionaries in their homeland (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 236). This resignification and reconstruction of the landscape occurred all over the colonial world, even in the Arctic and sub-Arctic areas there was considerable effort by missionaries to construct gardens and generate interest in agriculture.[52] In the Mackenzie district, both Anglicans and Oblates attempted, "for a long time, to turn nomadic hunters into virtuous farmers" (Pannekoek 1972 cited in Mackinnon 1982: 50) and the process of attempted reform increased dramatically with the introduction of the first residential schools (Mackinnon 1982: 50) where agriculture was used not only to provision the school and mission but also as an instructional tool of civilised lifeways (ibid). For example, in giving evidence to the Schultz committee of the Canadian Senate in 1887-1888, Bishop Bompas, an Anglican missionary who travelled throughout the Athabasca and Mackenzie districts argued that the government needed to assign agents in these areas:

> The duty of the agents would be to establish farms on the two rivers named [the Peace and the Liard], and by this example to encourage Indians to do the same. The produce from the farms would admit Indian children being gathered together for schooling, which scarcity of provision at the time forbade, and the result of the effort might be the settling of the whole country on a solid basis of civilization and advancement.
>
> [cited in Oliver 1910: 75]

The manner and success of this process of attempted reformation of the landscape varied greatly depending upon a myriad of ecological and social factors. This process of change has been studied and written about by many environmental and ecological historians. A common theme in these studies (e.g., Cronon 1983, Arnold and

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[52] For a good description of the gardens in the Mackenzie Delta (primarily in Aklavik) as they existed in the 1940's see Stephansson (1945: 133-156). For a more complete historical description see Mackinnon (1982). Descriptions of agriculture in western Gwich'in country can be found in National Geographic Magazine (1898: 189)

Guha 1995, Nash 2001) is the idea that colonial agents went to other places in the world and attempted to reform the landscape into one that they considered to be ordered, a landscape in opposition to the now conquered "wilderness."

Wilderness had ceased to exist in the European imagination at home; it was something that was thought of as existing in the past. "In Europe wilderness existed in time;" however in the colonial places it could still be found, "in America [wilderness] existed in space" (Cosgrove 1995: 33). It is not hard to see the connection that can be made between this idea of past time and one of social evolution. Europeans had ordered their wilderness by virtue of their advanced nature, the rest of the world had not because their positions on the lower steps of the imaginary ladder of social evolution. If it were indeed the goal of the missionary and other agents of "civilisation" to bring the people who lived in this wilderness into the modern age of enlightenment, then a good place to start would be the reformation of a "wilderness" landscape according to the ideally ordered form of the garden. In much of European discourse and especially in that of the British, the garden remains the epitome of an ordered landscape:

> In Britain, the national (and imperial) capital of London is mythically surrounded by the "garden of England"—its Home Counties where the true social character of the nation is said to find expression in a domesticated landscape.
>
> [Cosgrove 1995: 32]

When powerful signifiers such as that of "the garden" in European discourse are used to colonise, these terms are then open for the colonised to use in their struggles for recognition. Harvey Feit[53] (1993) and Nancy Turner (2001) have described how two

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[53] Feit (1993: 172) points out that he was not the first to notice that Cree were using this discursive strategy. Scott (1988) argues that Cree elders will assert a direct counter claim to Euro-Canadian ownership of the land (cited in Feit 1993: 172). Richardson (1975) not only discusses and quotes elders using the metaphor of the garden but he also titled his first film about the Mistassini Cree Job's Garden.

different First Nations on almost opposite sides of Canada have come to use the term "garden" as a discursive strategy for stressing to outside audiences that their lands are ordered and are being used in rational ways according to their own perspectives on the proper relationships between people and the landscape. Mark Stevenson (2001:2), reacting to Nancy Turner's (2001) assertion about "gardens" has critiqued the use of such ideas as compounding the problem of colonialism in wildlife management. Stevenson (2001) argues that gardens are steeped in their own history of European environmental knowledge and are incommensurable with First Nations' bodies of environmental knowledge. At this level, Stevenson's assertion is correct, we are talking about at least two different things; however keeping in mind the discrepancy in power to assert and dominate using these ideas we can understand the adoption of terms such as "gardens" by First Nations as a discursive strategy of resistance to colonialism. Kwon (1993: 19) notes in his discussion of Siberian reindeer herder landscapes that the ideas and discourse that add to a colonised landscape are open to appropriation by the colonised to reflect the argument back on the colonisers and become metaphors of resistance. James Scott (1985: 205) argues that in circumstances where such power discrepancies occur the few tools that the disempowered can employ are those that have already been assigned legitimacy by the powerful. First Nations have recognised the role and legitimacy that ideas and terms like gardens had in the colonial process because ideas and terms such as these "taste" (Bahktin 1981:293) of their history and it has been a particularly nasty history indeed.

Colonial agents throughout North America often lauded the overt slaughters of wild animals for the reason of advancing civilisation, because it would open the land up

for "God's way" of producing food and it would force the Native population to adopt the European practices of agriculture and animal husbandry. The attitude was that you had to kill the animals in order to "save" the people. One of the most often cited cases of this has to do with the slaughter of the buffalo on the North American Plains (e.g., Dyck 1991, Geist 1996, Calloway 1996,[54] Haines 1995). The Canadian Government's position on this is that the buffalo were slaughtered in order to "clear the way for agriculture, railroads and settlements" (Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service 1982: 4). The case of the buffalo may be what first jumps to mind and could very well be common in the Canadian imagination—certainly it is the example which my students have referenced almost to the exclusion of all others when discussing changes in the Canadian landscape; however, while the impacts of the almost complete slaughter of a pivotal species, such as that of the buffalo, were astronomical, what should be kept in mind is that this was a process that occurred in regards to many other species and many other areas as well.

The introduction of "Indian agents" was ostensibly so that they could serve as intermediaries handling the concerns of the Native peoples of British North America and the Crown. However, in many areas of Canada, Indian agents often took it upon themselves to domesticate the people—as was the model of the missionaries who preceded them—by stressing the importance of the practices of agriculture and animal husbandry. In the area of Walpole Island where I did my Master of Arts research (Wishart 1996) the actions and thoughts of the agents as described by Major John Richardson (1924) are quite telling. When the first "Indian Agent" arrived at Walpole

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[54] See especially the First Nations contributors to chapter 9

Island he was met with the fact that this area of Native land had fallen prey to white settlers who were squatting on the land:

> When the settlement was first placed under the charge of an Assistant Superintendent in 1838, these Indians possessed scarcely an acre of arable land, but he has succeeded in expelling many of the most mischievous intruders, under the authority of an act of the Provincial Legislature, passed in 1839; and has placed their farms at the disposal of the Indians, who have since become more settled, and have turned their attention more generally to agriculture.
>
> [Richardson 1924:106]

Farming was understood by the "Indian Agents" as progressive and they were quite pleased when the large game from the surrounding areas had all but disappeared and was replaced with cultivated fields, because this forced the residents of Walpole Island to farm, and thus to become assimilated. In order to hasten this process, the British Government would not send trade goods used for hunting to the Island; instead, they would only send "implements of husbandry" (Richardson 1924:59-60).

Noel Dyck (1991: 6) refers to the fact that throughout Canada a process occurred where at first European colonisers were content to allow First Nations to live according to their own lifeways, then when it became more economically advantageous to assimilate the First Nations a shift to a second phase occurred to destroy these lifeways through the process of "coercive tutelage":

> Relations between Indians and European explorers, fur traders, and missionaries tended to be reasonably co-operative during this [first] phase, chiefly because of the newcomers' economic dependence upon Indians and the fact that French and British colonial governments were seldom in a position to exercise coercion over Indians on a sustained basis. A second phase of relations followed large-scale occupation and more intensive economic exploitation of Indian territories by Euro-Canadian settlers. During this phase Indians whose lands were overtaken by settlement lost their subsistence economies and, thereafter, were dealt with not as allies or partners but as a subordinate client population. If the first phase of

> relations can be characterized as one of relative co-operation, the second can be identified as a phase of unilaterally imposed administration of one party by the other.
>
> [Dyck 1991: 6]

One of the resulting impositions was the reserve agricultural program developed and implemented in Canada during the late 1800s and extending until well after the First World War. This program was designed to introduce agriculture to the First Nations of Canada's northwest thereby freeing up lands for white settlement and civilising the First Nations at the same time. At the beginning of the program there was debate amongst officials as to whether First Nations individuals were even capable of farming:

> Even at the outset of the reserve agricultural program the prime minister expressed misgivings concerning the feasibility of altering the intrinsic nature of Indians or, as he put it, of turning a "deer" into an "ox."
>
> [Dyck 1991: 85]

Despite the racial determinism of such views it still became public policy that First Nations could be civilized through the process of changing their mode of production. When this system failed, it was never thought that the system of tutelage was at fault or that First Nations may have resisted for multiple political and cultural reasons. Rather, it was thought that the Indians were still too primitive, but would change with succeeding generations (Dyck 1991: 85). It was basically argued that it would take time to domesticate the people through such means and that instant assimilation into civilized Euro-Canadian life should not be expected. As with the models of social evolution it was thought that there would be an intermediate stage of simple agriculture and horticulture after which the people would proceed to take on the same industrial agricultural pursuits of their Euro-Canadian neighbors:

> Indian commissioner Hayter Reed announced in 1889 that a new 'approved system of farming' was to be adopted on western Indian

> reserves. Indian farmers were to emulate 'peasants of various countries' who kept their operations small and their implements rudimentary. In Reed's opinion a single acre of wheat, a portion of a second acre for roots and vegetables, and a cow or two could provide sufficiently for an Indian farmer and his family. He argued that it was better for Indians to cultivate a small acreage properly than to attempt to extend the area under cultivation.
>
> [Carter 1989: 27]

Following this general model of peasant farming, the government believed that all treaty gifts—which in the past had been made up primarily of hunting implements—should be discontinued and agricultural tools such as the hoe, the rake, and the sickle should replace them so that First Nations could gradually learn the ways of agriculture by first using the "simplest" tools (Carter 1989: 28).

In the far north, agriculture has always been difficult due to the climate. So attempts at the colonisation of the consciousness of the First Nations through agricultural means has always been fraught with an additional climactic element of failure. However this does not mean that attempts were not made and it certainly does not mean that it was not theorised by southern politicians and missionaries. Shortly after the purchase of Rupert's Land, the Hudson Bay Territory, and the Northwest Territory by the Dominion of Canada in 1869 there were on going political inquiries into the value of the resources contained within these lands and the potential to further develop the north for southern markets. These inquiries lead to the "Schultz committees of the Senate" in 1887 and 1888 and then to the Davis committee in 1907. These committees had the same charge: to investigate the characteristics and potential of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, minerals, climate, settlements, and means of communication within the area known as the Mackenzie Basin (Oliver 1910: 7-9). Eyes were beginning to be set on the north as the next step in transforming the wilderness into productive landscapes:

> Up to 1874 that portion of Canada beyond the confines of the infant province of Manitoba was to the world at large a *terra incognito*, which had been penetrated, but along a few routes, by the explorer, the fur trader and the missionary. In the summer of the year named the great district west of Manitoba was "opened up" by the Northwest Mounted Police as far as Macloed in the south, and Edmonton in the north. In 1885 the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway main line gave western Canada direct communication with the eastern provinces, and a fair chance to develop her natural resources, particularly in the southern sections, through which the line was constructed.
>
> The work of transforming the virgin prairies of Manitoba and southern Saskatchewan and Alberta into productive grain fields and pastures is rapidly approaching completion, and places which up to 1880 had never been visited by a white man, are now the sites of large and prosperous cities.
>
> While the work of developing the southern portion of the new western provinces was yet in its infancy the claim of the resources of the great northland to national attention began to assert itself. *Hon. Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, Canada.*
>
> [Oliver 1910: 7]

Similar attempts to change the way of things to conform to a European model of landscape did occur under the guise of various practices in Gwich'in country throughout the period of early contact. For example, European missionaries, traders, etc. insisted that firewood be procured in an "orderly way."

In the Journal of All Saints Mission in Aklavik 1922-1924, the Anglican missionaries wrote that the Natives were doing a good job procuring firewood for themselves. At that time, as it is now, Gwich'in would hunt out dry trees to cut for themselves. These trees would be cut and hauled back to camp as needed. However, the missionaries insisted that the Natives cut wood the "proper" way when getting wood for the mission. The missionaries insisted that they cut trees whether alive or dead in a clear-cut style. The wood was then to be stacked in an "orderly fashion" and seasoned for one

year. The price paid for wood at that time was "$3 for 128 cubic feet" (1/2 cord) (Public Archives of Canada). The Gwich'in continued to cut wood for themselves according to their way of interacting with their landscape, while the missionaries tried to change this by introducing a wage system, and at the same time changing the way that wood was cut and stored, in accordance with a landscape that they considered being more orderly. The missionaries directed that wood should be cut as closely as possible to the permanent settlement, furthering their ability to clear the land for any future agricultural possibilities. To return this discussion to the original problem: why it was that these colonial efforts were agreed upon by both the church and the government in the south, but were far more contentious in the north during the same time period, it is necessary to explore just what "the north" meant, and how this idea further defined the people living there as being primitive.

However, to get back to the original problem of why it was that these colonial efforts were agreed upon by both the church and the government in the south but were far more contentious in the north, it is necessary to explore just what "the north" means and how this idea was also used to create a construction in regards to the people living there.

North of The Frontier

The idea of the Garden as the centre of civilised interaction with the landscape becomes entwined with the idea of the frontier—that imaginary, myth-laden line which separates a wild and a domesticated, conquered landscape (Slotkin 1986, Nash 2001, Furniss 1999), or in words of the Honourable Frank Oliver (1910: 7) a separation between a "virgin" and a "penetrated," "productive" landscape: everything, people included, that can be found beyond the frontier are regarded as being wild. The north is

often referred to (ironically, along with many other places) as the "last frontier." The idea of "wilderness" and "the north" was not necessarily a pejorative one, however the idea is highly persistent and I still hear people talking about First Nations rights to hunt and fish using these value-laden terms. For example, one sports fisherman said to me, "if they act like Indians up there in the wild, then that is good but they have been corrupted by us, you know using our tools, drinking our booze, all that stuff." This sets up a constructed opposition between the unspoiled and noble savage living beyond the edge of the frontier and the spoilt, half civilised, but not yet completely assimilated stereotype of the Native person who needs to become fully assimilated through further interventions, colonial efforts, and other forms of "coercive tutelage" (Dyck 1991:3).

Around the same time that the Canadian Government made the suggestion that the people of the north were for the time being "best left as Indians" (Pedley 1906, cited in Coates 1985: 123) there was a considerable expenditure of resources to develop a means of conquering the Arctic through the introduction of animal husbandry and horticulture. This resulted in the Senate committees of 1887-1888 and 1906 which gave evidence to the Senate of Canada indicating that in similar arctic areas around the world animal husbandry was a common practice and, furthermore, that animals raised near the northern limits of their range were generally in better condition than those raised in the south (Oliver 1910: 64). Indeed, it was argued by Professor J. Macoun, Botanist to the Geological Survey of Canada that if cattle raised in northern areas were superior to those raised in southern areas, then perhaps the same would hold true of cattle raised in even more northern climes such as that of the Mackenzie Basin:

> ...domesticated animals would in the future be raised in the Mackenzie Basin. Sheep, horses, pigs, and cattle can and will be raised there. It is a

> law of nature that they cannot fatten cattle in southern Texas because it is not cold enough to solidify the fat, as it were, and they have to drive Texan cattle north to fatten them. Every animal, as you go north, produces more fat, and it is easier fattened, because it is the law of nature that fat should be laid up.
>
> [Macoun cited in Oliver 1910: 40]

Another integral part of this general question involved investigation about the lifeways and general condition of Aboriginal peoples in the arctic. It was theorised by many that introducing animal husbandry could be a good means of assimilating the First Nations, and while the herders of other northern regions in the world could not really be referred to as "civilised," it was certainly understood as a step in the right direction.

My primary source for the investigation by the Canadian government is the typewritten transcripts of the evidence given at the *Royal Commission To Investigate The Possibilities of the Reindeer and Muskox Industry in Canada* that took place in Ottawa starting on January 24, 1920. The primary stated reason for the royal commission was to gather evidence to corroborate a report of The Committee of the Privy Council dated May 9, 1919 (RRCIPRMIC 1922:7) that argued the following:

> In all parts of the world there is a constant reduction of grazing areas through the development of such areas for field crops and in consequence the meat and wool problems are every year becoming more acute.
>
> [RRCIPRMIC 1922: 7]

By this point in history, the Canadian government had concluded that the Arctic and sub-arctic regions were not suitable for the growing of cereals and while the climate does produce ample amounts of vegetation suitable for grazing animals, cattle could not survive the long harsh winters without vast expenditures in providing them shelter and food.

It should also be kept in mind that this period of history is marked by the economic and social upheavals of the First World War and the influenza epidemic of 1918. Adding these elements and the world wide collapse in fur prices to the already documented impetus for the northern expansion of capitalist landscapes beyond the already "penetrated" but still "undeveloped" frontier, it can be understood why the eyes of the government were shifting to the north to seek out new sources of raw materials for the capitalist machine.[55] It was therefore believed that the arctic and sub-arctic regions of Canada should be considered as areas that would be suited to the herding of large mammals—reindeer and muskox being of the greatest importance. The meat produced through the domestication of deer and muskox could supply the Dominion with meat and muskox could also supply high quality wool. The economic opportunities presented by the presence of caribou and muskox had already been investigated in the Senate committees of 1887-1888, 1906, but the Royal Commission stressed the economic element to a much larger degree. I believe that part of this push is the responsibility of Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the arctic explorer, leading member of the Royal Commission, and first to apply for a lease for grazing purposes of a large area of Baffin Island[56] (RRCIPRMIC 1922: 11). It was Stefansson who argued that muskox meat is "practically indistinguishable from beef" (cited in RRCIPRMIC 1922: 7) which upon personal experience is an exaggeration to say the least.

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[55] There was also a precedent for this activity in the British homeland of many of the officials. About one hundred years earlier, Great Britain had done a similar thing with the introduction of large-scale sheep herding in the Scottish highlands. This introduction lead to the clearance of thousands of Scots off of the land and congregated them in industrial port cities where the meat and wool from the sheep was in even greater demand and helped drive up the price to the benefit of the landowners. The parallels between and the political ramifications of the two actions will be an area of inquiry in my future research.

[56] Indeed, he resigned from the commission upon filing his application.

The text of the report is therefore aimed at analyzing the potential for the commercial production of meat and wool; however, from the very beginning of the inquiry there is also the implication of the domestication of the arctic and sub-arctic landscape through the introduction of herding industries.

The Royal Commission presented an analysis by the commissioners of the evidence gathered from thirty-five witnesses to the Honourable Charles Stewart, Minister, Department of the Interior in 1920. The commissioners were John Gunion Rutherford, of Ottawa, Railway Commissioner (chairman); James Stanley McLean, of Toronto, Manager, Harris-Abattoir Co.; James Bernard Harkin, of Ottawa, Commissioner of Dominion Parks; and Vilhjalmur Stefansson. Of those presenting evidence, none of whom were First Nations or Inuit, were a collection of whaling captains, including Captain George Comer who had been a member of many whaling expeditions in the arctic spanning over fifty years; missionaries from the Church of England (apparently no Roman Catholic missionaries were questioned), including Bishop Hoare, Bishop Lucas, Bishop Stringer, and Bishop Reeve; geologists, geographers, and engineers from the Canadian Arctic Expedition and the Canadian Topographical Survey; members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; C.C. Parker, inspector of Indian Agencies for Ontario and Quebec; and one lone ethnologist from the Canadian Arctic Expedition, Diamond Jenness.

In the transcripts, from the very first witness called there are constant questions posed about the potential of the area as grassland and the possibility of confinement of herds either through fences or natural barriers. For example, the first witness called is Captain George Comer—the whaler—and the way he is questioned by the commissioners

is the general style for the rest of the witnesses: "Q—Captain Comer, it will perhaps be better if you will give us a short history of your experience. Tell your story your own way. When we come to a place where we want more information. We can ask for it" (RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 4).

The style of questions is actually very helpful as the points of interruption indicate not only the text but also the common apprehension of the question in these proceedings. The first point where he is interrupted is when he is discussing vegetation. The commission wants to know about the type of grass and the density of it and whether it is fairly consistent (RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 5). The second is about physical obstacles and whether animals cross the water or ice (RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 6). The third is about the presence of wild deer (RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 7). As was the case with many of the witnesses, this led him to talk about the "wanton slaughter" of the deer by the native people of the area and the fact that he only ordered the killing of 150 of deer by his men. The questions then proceed to investigate the physical well being of the Native people and their actions of "over-killing." After this come questions about the possibility of fencing off of areas and the need for keeping deer domesticated:

> A—You have to be shown. I don't think there is any need of fencing at all. You have the whole thing; the water acts as a fence. When you are talking about fencing, that would be to my mind wholly out of the question.
>
> Q—But you must remember that we have to keep the reindeer domesticated?
>
> A—Take the whole Island.
>
> Q—The whole Island, as I understand it, is as big as Ireland or a little bigger—and they are not domesticated there?
>
> [RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 12]

The idea of fences as a metaphor and as a very real marker of domestication in the European context has been explored by other scholars (e.g., Feit 1993, Brody 2000), so it is not surprising that at the time when these inquiries were being held an idea of separating animals from wilderness is pervasive in the quest for domesticating the north into productive grazing lands. Another element that is stressed in inquiries about fencing is whether the aboriginal peoples could be trusted to not hunt the domesticated animals should fencing not be used. A close examination of the transcripts reveals that a majority of the text is dedicated to questions about the physical nature of the land and the containment of grazing animals. Staying with the same testimony as above, George Comer is repeatedly asked about the potential of fencing and of the land for grazing purposes (e.g., RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 22). This is the way all of the interviews proceed with the "experts"—such as the geologists, geographers and engineers—who traveled extensively but whose contact with Native people was secondary to their primary mission in the north.[57] A type question that each person, almost without exception, is asked is whether " From your knowledge of the natives… do you think they would prove suitable for herding purposes; could they be educated to it" (RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 30). In other words, could the aboriginal people be domesticated as well? With individuals, i.e., missionaries, whose primary reason for being in the north was to convert the Native people, then the questions about the lifeways and condition of these people is stressed.

If the actual sole point of this inquiry was to garner evidence for the plausibility of just providing meat and wool for the Dominion then the question of the physical and moral well being of Native people would not be so heavily emphasized. Here there is

[57] However, even these individuals were asked questions about the physical well-being of Native people. This is an important part of the text to keep in mind for later discussion in the report.

another level to the text; that of the domestication of corrupted "wild" people through the introduction of civilized activities. Blatant talk about how the people might be better off than their original condition and certainly better off than the condition of "corruption" in which they now find themselves (RRCIPRMIC 1922: 18) with the introduction of herding makes it fairly clear that this was an obvious reason for proceeding.[58] For example, in reaction to questions about the Natives of the Mackenzie delta and the plausibility of them becoming herders, Bishop Stringer argues:

> In the first place it will *help the natives* tremendously and in the second place I believe it will be *a great asset to the country* in years to come. With reference to the natives it has been too often said that the only good Indian is a dead Indian. This was very falsely said. I think that with this industry rightly managed and supported as it should be by the government of Canada, that it will never be said of the Eskimo of the Arctic coast that the only good Eskimo is a dead Eskimo, but that both the Eskimo and the Indians instead of *being liabilities* will become *assets*.[59]
>
> [RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 193]

Bishop Stringer's words map out the meaning of the inquiry quite well. It is not a simple argument about how Natives are uncivilized and need to be taught proper ways of existing and that by providing them with roles in the settling of the north and changing their mode of production they will themselves become assets to the country, but rather it is an argument about how they used to be assets to themselves but have been led down the wrong path and taught uncivilized ways from the dregs of white society. Now they are "liabilities" in need of saving through the introduction of herding as a productive role, hopefully, not outside of their abilities. Further questioning of Bishop stringer about the

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[58] Only Diamond Jenness debated this assertion pointing out that the people probably prefer to remain hunters and fishermen but could be forced into herding should game become "scarce" (RRCIPRMIC 1922: 33).

[59] Emphasis mine.

suitability of Natives becoming herders and who should be in charge of the herds is quite telling. The dialogue proceeds as follows:

> The Chairman: By that you mean that the greatest possible care must be exercised by the government in the selection of the men who are placed in charge of the experiment and in charge of the animals?
>
> A—Yes, and in supervising and making regulations so that the Eskimo or Indians will not be spoiled but will be to as large an extent as possible made self-supporting and protected from any kind of evil influence.
>
> [RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 197-98]

I think the clearest equation that is made in the text between the potential for downward evolution of people and animals is made in the following exchange between Stefansson and W. E. B. Hoare, missionary:

> Q [Stefansson]—If you turned the reindeer out of Southampton Island they would very soon become absorbed in the caribou herds?
>
> A—Yes; the one would absorb the other. The chances are that they would go wild.
>
> Q—That is the natural tendency — it is the same with the human species?
>
> A—The tendency is downward, and it takes an effort to keep up, and a big one at that.
>
> [RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 22]

The understanding underpinning all of these exchanges is that the Native people have been victims of a disorderly and immoral plundering (or again, "penetration") of the north by Europeans and Americans, be they whalers, whiskey traders, fur trappers, or prospectors.

This "fallen from grace" understanding of the Aboriginal condition, is pervasive throughout the questioning but is perhaps best documented from the following exchange with Bishop Lucas:

> The Chairman: ...If something can be done to shield the natives who are at the present time in a state of simplicity, that is what we would hope for.
>
> Mr. Stefansson: You are of the opinion that taking civilization as you say in its broadest sense...that on the whole it has had a bad effect on the natives?
>
> A—Well, I don't want to generalize too much. It may have a bad effect. That is civilization with its evils. Civilization is a good term, but civilization with its evils, I speak with that qualification.
>
> Q—You would like to protect the natives from the evils of civilization?
>
> A—Yes, indeed...
>
> [RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 90-91]

The idea of "debauched" (RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 91) Natives takes a couple of forms. The first is the idea that Native people have been deprived or are in danger of being deprived of sufficient food for survival. Questions of starvation are always asked first and statements of overkilling usually accompany them. For example, W.H.B. Hoare replies to the question about their food supply by stating:

> Before they had rifles I think they were getting along fairly well, but now I would not like to say that. They are inclined to kill more than they need and they leave the ice, they seal all winter and they leave the ice in the spring to get the caribou. Now that they have rifles they get tired of seal meat and they go inland and get caribou instead of waiting for them to come to the coast, and it looks as if they were deflecting the course of the deer.
>
> [RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 78]

The idea of importing deer for Native people to eat is not really stressed too much in these transcripts. Many of the people testifying believe that it would be best to allow the

Native people who still successfully hunt, to hunt wild deer and leave the domesticated meat supply for the growing white population of the north. In other words the wild animals should be left, and indeed, protected for the sole use of those natives who have retained their noble ways, e.g.:

> All this game and food that is in the sea or on the land belongs to these natives... If food becomes scarce the natives decrease; they increase and decrease according to the supply of food. As long as the sea is full of life, I would protect everything on behalf of the natives.
>
> [Comer in RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 32]

It may be true that this was the intention, that wild animals should be reserved for the unspoiled Native peoples, but Reindeer served another assimilating effort. Several elders told me that the reindeer meat was used to feed the people while they were at the residential schools. Eileen Koe told me: "It was good that they brought those reindeer here. At least we didn't starve as much for meat as some other children in residential schools."

The second aspect of this fallen from grace attitude is the idea of disease and morality. A massive amount of text is dedicated to questions of disease and a good portion of this text is dedicated to questions of diseases associated with sexual transmission. For example in questioning Lt. Col. C. Starnes, Royal Canadian Mounted Police:

> Q—amongst those Indians, I suppose their idea and your idea of morality—and theirs is not quite the same, those that are not Christianized, while those that are Christianized know very well and accept the situation, but some do not, a lot do not accept our standard of morality... If you have people of that sort, and they run up against husky trappers and miners going up there, it will not be very long until they commence to cohabit?
>
> A—No.

Q—Do you know of many of the Indian women suffering from those diseases?

A—Up to my time of leaving there were very few…

Q—Would you know them intimately enough to get that knowledge?

A—Yes.

Q—They would tell you?

A—No, they would not tell me, but I would get to know.
[RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 402-403]

To be fair, much of the discussion about disease also centers around very genuine concerns about tuberculosis, influenza and other diseases that had massive impacts on Native people, but the persistent implication of moral degradation being evidenced by venereal diseases is important to the argument about why reindeer herding was considered to be a step towards civilizing the north.

The image thus portrayed by the inquiry in its dealing with Native people is one where changing technology has allowed for the over-killing of animals by Native people, an impact made worse by the illegal killing of fur and game by white traders, and that constraint must be taught to the Native people so that they might be able to continue to live somewhat as their noble ancestors. However, some Native people have already diverged too far from this ancestral state and they are ones that should be saved from the debauchery of civilization by teaching them how to herd, thus civilizing them properly. Once all of the above has been taken into consideration, then the following quote from the Chairman of the Commission can be read as a statement about the process of colonization of a people and their consciousness:

> There are those features of the situation that have an indirect bearing upon this whole inquiry. One of the objects which the government has in view in discussing the feasibility of the introduction of the domestic reindeer in the Northwest is the furnishing of a handy and reliable food supply for the natives, as well as furnishing them with draft animals and inducing habits of thrift and ownership, and I do not know, as I have already said, any group of men whose advice would be of greater value, as covering those phases of inquiry, than that of yourself and your colleagues, because you have been personally interested for many years in these very questions.
> [RRCIPRMIC 1922a: 392-93]

One result of these inquiries was a decision to purchase a herd of three thousand reindeer from a pre-existing experiment in Alaska and move them to Richard's Island. The move was put in the hands of a Lapp named Andrew Bahr who moved the herd 1 500 miles over a period of three years beginning in 1929. Four fifths of the herd did not survive the journey but they multiplied under the watch of Government managers to a herd of 12 thousand by the summer of 1943. As indicated by the testimony given at the Royal Commission, this herd was meant to assist in the assimilation of "Eskimo" and "Indian" people. However there is another level at which this political decision was aimed, that is the idea of conservation: "Intended to bring a new livelihood to the Eskimos, and to supplement their food supply, the use of domesticated deer also conserves the Territory's diminishing wildlife" (Stefansson 1945: 138).

While the Royal Commission was set up to investigate the possibility of introducing animal husbandry to the north, the Commission made fifteen recommendations the last five of which are set apart by the following pre-amble:

> Altogether apart from the proposed introduction of domestic reindeer the vast herds of wild CARIBOU which undoubtedly still exist in the interior mainland area, repeatedly referred to in this report, constitute a valuable national asset, the importance of which, if properly dealt with, can be enormously enhanced, and your commissioners therefore respectfully recommend…

[RRCIPRMIC 1922: 37]

The last five recommendations are: (11) a study of the exact numbers of caribou; (12) a study of the vegetation that they use and whether it would make suitable fodder for domestic animals; (13) "that special attention be given to the enforcement of such regulations as will effectively prevent the wasteful or useless slaughter of the wild caribou, either by natives or others; (14) a systematic campaign be launched to exterminate the wolves, wolverine and other animals which prey on the caribou; (15) slowly wild caribou should be introduced into the reindeer herds through the acceptance of a few wild young each year into the domestic herds. In the case of Muskox the language of conservation is even stronger. The second recommendation that the commission makes is: (2) "That a policy of preventing any further slaughter of these animals [muskox] either by natives or by white men, except in the case of dire necessity, be rigidly enforced" (RRCIPRMIC 1922: 36-38). While most of the recommendations are aimed at trying to bolster the proposed industry, there is the stated cause of reforming the native peoples. Recommendation number six:

> (6) That where suitable arrangements can be made, the various missionary bodies be requested to co-operate in an earnest effort to ensure the success of the undertaking, not only by influencing the natives to protect the animals, but also by encouraging them to learn how to handle and care for them, so that they may become herders and eventual owners of herds.
>
> [RRCIPRMIC 1922: 36]

So coupled with the idea of reforming the lifeways of a people we have a new idea beginning to take prominence in the discourse of wildlife management, the idea of conservation and even enhancement of owned natural resources.

Wildlife Management and the Conservation of Scarce Resources:

Many ecological historians point to the idea that the disappearance of the frontier, the idea of scarce pockets of "untouched" wilderness, and the conservationist movement are intimately tied together. The resulting dialectic can be seen in the evidence and recommendations of the Royal Commission because it occurred at a time when these ideas were first beginning to crystallise in Canadian discourse and Gwich'in point out that this was the time—post 1920—when new laws began to come "to our country." However, this movement was not unique to Canada. This idea is also stressed in the introduction to the latest edition of Roderick Frazer Nash's seminal text Wilderness and the American Mind where he traces the history of today's environmental movements back to this general time period:

> After the psychologically important ending of the American Frontier in 1890, the scarcity theory of value began to work on behalf of wilderness. They could begin to understand it as an asset rather than as an adversary. Perhaps un-controlled nature could be beautiful; maybe it was more appropriate for worship than churches; certainly it had a lot to do with American character and tradition and, possibly, with mental health in an increasingly complex civilization. Some even began to reason that since the wilderness had been conquered, now was the time to conquer the self-destructive tendencies of civilization. Wilderness might be useful in that task as a symbol of restraint, an environmental base on which to build a legacy of limitation and sustainability. By the end of the twentieth century a vanguard of philosophers, intellectuals, and activists were even testing the deep ethical waters that accorded wilderness, and nature in general, existence rights totally independent of their utility to people.
>
> [Nash 2001: xiv]

While the idea of "un-controlled nature" is highly problematic from the perspective of the First Nations people I have worked with, and I will be addressing this idea in the following chapter on First Nation's resistance, I think we can start to further deconstruct what was going on with the idea of "best left as Indians." The idea that parts of the North

were untouched wilderness, coupled with a growing idea that wilderness could be a scarce commodity and treated with the same supply and demand economics of other resources, meant that if the people were really acting like Indians perhaps they too as part of the wild should be conserved for future use. It was thought at the time that these were things that were certainly valuable at the time, with the fur industry making a slow recovery from the fall-out of the First World War, and they may become more useful with other industrial advancements in the future. Conserving some of the wilderness, people included, might be of future value, so it was best, from the government perspective, to take a "wait and see" type of approach.

However, "wait and see" never lasts very long. A series of events put the Canadian government into a position of having to form conservationist laws. As can be seen from the testimony given at the *Royal Commission To Investigate The Possibilities of the Reindeer and Muskox Industry in Canada*, there was a general opinion being formed—an opinion still persistent today—that Native people were beginning to hunt irresponsibly due to the introduction of destructive forces from Europeans:

> The capacity of the European settlers to trap, to shoot, to burn the forests and clear new land for farms soon began to alter the picture of harmony and plenty. Indians, too, quickly took up the use of firearms obtained from the newcomers. Wildlife numbers dropped, sometimes with astonishing abruptness.
>
> [Canadian Wildlife Service 1982: 5]

In the southern areas of Canada, like in the United States, the conservationist movement began to change policy as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. This movement began with the observation that migratory waterfowl were rapidly diminishing in numbers. Beginning as early as 1900, many Americans were demanding an international agreement on the conservation of these valuable resources. However the British North

America Act of 1867 placed Canada's natural resources under provincial jurisdiction. The Canadian government was thus feeling the pressure from many different parties to do something about dwindling stocks of wild birds and they finally signed the Migratory Birds Treaty with the United States in 1916. In order to facilitate this process, Parliament implemented a Commission on Conservation, which from 1909-1921 met with the provinces to develop the terms of the treaty. There was no First Nations involvement (Canadian Wildlife Service 1982: 16-18).

The impact of the limitations set forth by the passing of the Migratory Birds Act in the north was substantial for the aboriginal inhabitants. The purpose of the act was to conserve these birds in order to accommodate southern ideas about sport hunting and conservation. While in the north aboriginal people had always hunted migratory species in the spring,[60] it was now illegal to do so. Of all the laws passed, those in meeting the Migratory Birds Act are remembered by Gwich'in elders with the most distaste. Many elders I have talked to remember the days when they were "criminals for our tradition of hunting in the spring." Spring is a time when other resources become few, the meat from fall caribou hunting is gone, the moose become shy and wary, the fish have not begun their spring runs yet and are mostly locked away beneath a meter or more of dangerous, breaking up ice. It is a time that used to account for most of the instances of starvation and then suddenly the skies fill with countless geese, ducks, and swans. The land that used to be a seemingly lifeless, silent "starvation place" becomes so filled with movement and so noisy with mating and migrating birds that sleep is difficult. These birds got the people through what could otherwise be a very lean time. So the people continued to hunt them and this made them criminals in the eyes of many sportsmen and

[60] In Gwich'in country springtime is the only time to effectively hunt these birds.

wildlife management officials. This is one of the factors that lead to the beginning of what Coates refers to as "The Bureaucrat's North" (1985: 191).

The rise of conservationist attitudes in southern Canada coupled with the impression given by some poorly informed witnesses about the wholesale slaughter of animals by Native people, meant that now instead of a general attitude that Native people should be converted and reformed through the alteration of the landscape to European capitalistic norms, now the corrupted Native people would have to be managed in such a way so that they would learn how to restrain themselves so that animals and wilderness could be conserved. All of this began to be shaped through the "science" of wildlife management (who's very underpinnings are a set of colonial assumptions about landscape and aboriginal people). As a wildlife biologist told me: "managing wildlife or forests has nothing to do with the animals or the trees, it's really about managing the people."

These ideas are formed largely without the input of the very people who are defined by them, whether a wild savage living in the wilderness, or a half assimilated participant in European economic adventures, or an over-killing criminal, the aboriginal people have been defined (without their voices) by the manner in which the colonial agents have defined the land and the wildlife. At first the two, the people and the wildlife, were seen as one thing, an obstacle to colonial expansion, an entity living beyond the frontier. Earlier it was thought that reforming one meant conquering and assimilating the other; the politics had shifted, much of the politics was about conserving the one by managing or "co-managing" the other. The incredible contradictions and the many levels at which this management has been played out have not been lost on those whose voice

was denied until recent times. Like colonial efforts everywhere, this over definition of aboriginal people, the Gwich'in included, has not gone unchallenged.

Chapter Five
Gwich'in Resistance

Part One: Resistance to Management Schemes

The last chapter set out to demonstrate how wildlife management is tied to concepts that have a colonial past and continue to maintain themselves through the idea of scarcity as it applies to natural resources. Chief among these is the development in the popular imagination of the idea of wilderness and its apparent demise and the desire to maintain places of wilderness. The Royal Commission to investigate the possibility of developing a reindeer and muskox industry in the arctic and subarctic regions stands as an apt illustration of how people (in this case First Nations and Inuit) are often lumped into this process.

One of the biggest problems with colonial efforts is their one-sided nature; that is they attempt to reproduce the "natural" habitus of the colonizer through alteration of the colonized using multiple physical and symbolic manipulations by the colonial agents. The people much to the amazement and chagrin of agents who, once again, may not see themselves as agents, often resist these manipulations. One forest biologist sat in the camp of Thomas and Eileen Koe during the summer of 2001 and expressed her frustration with dealing with "the people." She said: "I come up with the science and the data telling people where they should cut trees, but they don't listen and go around cutting them where they want." Thomas heard this comment and said nothing at the time but a couple of days later he told me:

> You know people have been coming here for a long time and putting out bad laws[61] about what we can't do on the land. There used to be a really

[61] "Bad laws" has a double meaning in this case. It makes reference to the severe punishment one would receive if caught and to the fact that from a Gwich'in perspective the law is morally or ethically wrong.

> bad law about shooting ducks and geese in the spring, then they told us not to shoot geese at all. Remember this spring how many gugeh (snow geese) and daazraii (tundra swans) there were. There used to be a bad law about shooting these, now they say there are too many and they want us and the people further down (Inuvialuit) to shoot all we can because there is too much of it. We don't do it, we'll kill as much as always but not because *they* said to do it…

Resistance can come in many forms and through many actions and/or lack of action, but what seems to be clear is that the people being colonized with the ideas arising out of capitalism recognize and act upon the contradictions in the system. This has been well documented especially in peasant societies where peasants will manipulate the symbols of their oppressors through acts that point out the contradictions. Michael Taussig (1977) demonstrates how Colombian peasants through the act of illicit baptism of capital play upon commodity fetishism, especially the fetishization of money. Similarly, Indigenous people of North America and elsewhere are quick to point out the logical problems inherent in the ideas of wilderness and scarcity (e.g., Fiet 2001).

During the International Year of the world's Indigenous Peoples (1993), delegates and leaders from nineteen cultures met in New York to discuss their collective goals in forming the United Nations Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights. One of these leaders was Ingrid Washinawatok-El Issa, a Menomonee who was co-chair of the Indigenous Women's Network. She gave a regional communiqué that sought to sum up the various challenges faced by Indigenous people in North America. She identified two errors in the perception about North America at the time of contact by non-Indigenous people. These two errors, which are the idea that there were not many people living in North America and the idea of pristine wilderness, are key to the persistence of many of the colonial attitudes of North Americans:

> While it is difficult to estimate the number of Indians living on the continent [North America] in 1492, it is known that Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, was then among the largest cities in the world, and there was little of this continent that was not settled. The great ability of the native people to work with the environment, rather than against it, gave this continent the appearance of a vast wilderness, though most of it was managed in one way or another…
>
> [Washinawatok-El Issa 1994: 131]

Comments such as these evidence the fact that First Nations people throughout North America have concluded that their way of understanding the landscape and people's place within it differs greatly from the ideas of dominant society. Furthermore they understand and evaluate the actions of colonial powers in a different way, a way which points out the rarely deconstructed indexical qualities of terms such as wilderness and wildlife management, both of which are understood to be part of a colonial capitalist venture which places the control of resources in the hands of managers.

Again this has a great deal to do with the idea of scarcity. Peter Usher points out that the idea of scarcity means that the managers of resources end up taking on a proprietary stance towards the species in question (1979: 23). Many First Nations people are extremely wary of such ideas and will often react against them by pointing out that no one owns these things, that they cannot be measured in this way. It is not necessarily the science of counting the members of species that gets questioned, although it often does for good reasons, but it is the fact that once something has been counted the members of that species are then assigned managers who act as if they own them. Citing the case of salmon fishing in British Columbia, Usher describes the problem:

> [The management] of salmonid enhancement has not been universally welcomed by Indian people in the interior, however, and their objections reveal a fundamental issue. There is fear that, whether or not the stocks of salmon are actually augmented (and Indian people do not have full confidence in the outcome of environmental manipulation by whites), the

> infusion of such vast amounts of money and effort into this program can only lead the non-Native community to the view that salmon is no longer a natural resource but a human creation. Salmon will no longer be a free good, but rather the private property of those who made it, and the salmonid enhancement program will be seen as reliant on the money and initiatives of whites, not Indians, since Indians are by and large poor people who pay less taxes than most. One day whites may be able to argue that the Indian food fishery is not an aboriginal right, but a privilege, granted by those who paid for and managed these resources. A managed good is not a free good.
>
> [Usher 1979: 6]

This idea of an owned resource is certainly not limited to the salmon food fishery. Indeed, Asch (1989: 206) argues that the very definition of "wildlife" is connected to state owned resources. I have heard the notion elsewhere, and the media is full of statements that back up the First Nation's suspicions. Just recently, I was talking to an outdoor enthusiast who likes to fish for trout through the ice. He was curious about what I was writing about and I told him, he then proceeded to say, "that's good but you know those guys [Aboriginal people] poach a lot of our resources." He then went on to tell me a story about fishing on a lake that borders a reserve North West of Edmonton. He told me how he had been fishing all day with legal tackle and legal bait. He could see many trout swimming around but none were taking the bait. Then, two "Indians" come by with a couple of snares and "yank several of these trout" out of the water in no time at all, and then they left. He reflected a bit on the fact that he is only "allowed" to use methods that rarely work but these "Indians" do not seem bound to these ideas. But what he said next was telling. He got angry and said, "you know our license fees and our taxes put those fish there for us to catch and then those Indians come and take the fish away."

In the face of such ideas, First Nations people have therefore always been wary of management programs that place the control of animals and plants into the hands of

people interested in viewing them as scarce capital. This is one of the reasons why elders so often talk about the ideas of ownership when asked about their relationship to the animals and the land. For example, Richard Nerysoo, a Gwich'in elder from Fort McPherson was recorded as saying the following when reacting to the actions of wildlife managers and the anti-fur lobby:

> It is very clear to me that it is an important and special thing to be an aboriginal person. It means being able to understand and live with this world in a very special way. It means living with the land, with the animals and with the birds and fish as though they were your brothers and sisters. It means saying the land is an old friend, an old friend that your father knew and your grandfather knew... indeed, a friend that your people have always known.
>
> We see the land as much, much more than others see it. Land is not money. To the aboriginal person, land is life. Without our land, and the way of life it has always provided, we can no longer exist as people. If the relationship is destroyed, we too are destroyed.
>
> [Nerysoo 1985: 5]

As pointed out in the last chapter, and as described in the quote from Thomas Koe, one of the areas where the intersection between First Nation's traditional use of resources and wildlife management of scarce resources has occurred has been over the issue of the management of migratory waterfowl. After the signing of the Migratory Birds Convention in 1916 and then the implementation of this convention into an Act in 1918, spring hunting of waterfowl was made illegal. The primary reason for implementing this law was to control market hunting in the United States and in Canada. Thus the law stipulated that any hunting of migratory birds was illegal throughout the United States and Canada during the period between March 11 and August 31. During the rest of the year, local jurisdictions could open a legal hunting season (Hewitt 1921: 35-36). What this meant in northern regions where ducks, geese and swans arrive during

their migrations long after March 11 and tend to leave prior to August 31 was that there was no legal hunting of these birds. This placed First Nations living in the northern areas of Canada and the United States in the awkward position of maintaining their traditional hunts in the face of potential legal retribution (Bromley 1996: 71). While there was an informal policy of non-enforcement for spring subsistence hunting in the north, this seems to have been due primarily to a lack of personnel to enforce the regulations rather than to any idea of aboriginal needs or rights. This is evidenced by the fact that spring water fowling by aboriginal peoples continued to be practiced throughout the north except in areas adjacent to detachments of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Bromley 1996: 71). Elders from Fort McPherson talk openly about the days when they were outlaws because of their harvesting activities. They discuss how one had to be really careful about shooting ducks, geese and swans and how it was best to pluck, cook and eat the birds away from the camp. If they were brought back to camp all the evidence had to be destroyed. This usually meant rounding up all the stray feathers, the innards and the bones and burning them in a fire. They said they lived in constant fear that they would be caught feeding themselves.

This situation of resistance to this particular wildlife management law has been explored to greater or lesser degree by several anthropologists working with sub-arctic and arctic aboriginal peoples (e.g., Scott 1986, 1988, Berkes 1982, Macaulay and Boag 1974, Usher 1976b, Morrow and Hensel 1992, Feit 1980, 2001, Bromley 1996, Freeman 1985). However it was not until the early 1970's when the James Bay Agreement was being formulated that the scope of Aboriginal spring hunting was brought to the attention of wider audiences. Under section 24.6.2 of the James Bay Agreement there are

guaranteed levels of "native harvesting." In order to determine these levels hunters were interviewed about the number of certain species that they take each year. The hunters, in open defiance of the act forbidding spring hunting, reported taking significant numbers of ducks and geese during the spring migration (Berkes 1982: 25). Until this point, southern sports hunters from Canada and the United States were busy blaming each other for dwindling stocks, now they had a new group to blame and the editorials began to fly off the pages of sporting magazines condemning the Aboriginal peoples of the north for "stealing" their resources. This situation began to become more intense because the government of Canada seemingly refused to do anything about it and even began discussing including provisions in land claims for the right to hunt spring birds (e.g., Williams 1986).

At the same time, waterfowl managers and biologists became concerned with what they understood to be an "unregulated" hunt that had the potential for "damaging the populations [they] are charged to conserve" (Boyd 1977: 465). Furthermore, because the Migratory Birds Act is an agreement between the United States and Canada, there was pressure on the Canadian government to further research the situation. The Canadian government was stuck between its role in settling Northern Aboriginal concerns and land claims while at the same time trying to re-assure conservationists and sports hunters that it was doing something about the "unregulated slaughter of migratory birds by native Canadians" (J. Roberts, Minister, Environment Canada, 24 July 1980, Cited in Berkes 1982: 26). What followed was about 25 years of uncertainty. Aboriginal people assumed and argued that they had the right to subsistence hunting of migratory birds. Management officials and sports hunters were not as convinced and there was still an air of illegality

about the hunting of spring birds. Finally after two decades of debate and considerable pressures being placed on the governments of Canada and the United States by Aboriginal leaders, conservationists, and the powerful sports hunting lobby, a protocol was signed on December 14, 1995. The "Protocol Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada Amending the 1916 Convention Between the United Kingdom and the United States of America for the Protection of Migratory Birds in Canada and the United States" was aimed at settling these contentious issues. In effect it legalised the hunting of migratory birds by aboriginal people in Canada and the United States at any time of year; however, this "right to harvest" does not overshadow the conservationist goals of the original act. In fact this was the final point discussed between the two parties after signing as discussed in two notes between the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher and the Ambassador to the United States, Raymond Chretien, fully duplicated here:

> December 14, 1995
>
> His Excellency
> Raymond Chretien,
> Ambassador of Canada.
>
> Excellency:
> I have the honor to present my compliments and to refer to the Protocol Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Canada Amending the 1916 Convention Between the United Kingdom and the United States of America for the Protection of Migratory Birds in Canada and the United States (hereinafter, the "Protocol"), signed by representatives of our two Governments today.
>
> I have the honor to inform your Excellency that the Government of the United States of America wishes to confirm the following interpretation of Article II. The opening paragraph of Article II states that both governments shall manage migratory bird populations in accord with several stated conservation principles. That paragraph also lists illustrative

means to pursue those principles. It is the understanding of the Government of United States of America that all of the activities allowed under Article II, including the taking and use of migratory birds and their eggs by Aboriginal peoples in Canada and by indigenous inhabitants of Alaska, are, pursuant to the Protocol, to be conducted in accord with these conservation principles.

I would appreciate confirmation that the Government of Canada shares the aforementioned interpretation of Article II of the Protocol.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.
[Signature]
Note No. 205

The Honorable Warren Christopher
Secretary of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Christopher,
I have the honour to refer to your Excellency's Note of today, concerning the interpretation of the Protocol Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America Amending the 1916 Convention Between the United Kingdom and the United States of America for the Protection of Migratory Birds in Canada and the United States, signed today.

I have the further honour to inform you that the Government of Canada shares the interpretation contained in your Excellency's Note.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Raymond Chretien
Ambassador
December 14, 1995
Washington, D.C.

What these notes point out is that Aboriginal people have gained recognition for certain rights to harvest natural resources according to their traditions over the last couple of decades; however, the fact that the resources are still managed as "scarce resources" puts the final decision as to whether they can harvest or not in the hands of management officials who may use foreign ideas to "protect" these particular resources. I would now

like to present one situation that I encountered while doing field work and work through it according to the ideas presented thus far.

Part 2: A Story About a Muskox: Some Implications of Teetl'it Gwich'in Human-Animal Relationships[62]

In anthropology the growing body of literature concerned with state-aboriginal relations as they centre on issues of wildlife management,[63] coincide and refer to another, larger literature regarding aboriginal human-animal and human-land relationships.[64] While both of these bodies of literature are directly relevant, rather than revisiting these arguments directly this section will make use of their general messages while focusing on what I was told by one wildlife officer and some Gwich'in elders about the ramifications of one particular hunting incident when a muskox was killed by a Teetl'it Gwich'in elder from the community of Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories, Canada.

I present my argument in a first person-narrative manner in order to elicit a local way of knowing that my teachers in the field have taught to me. When I first presented a version of this section at the Twelfth Inuit Studies Conference at the University of Aberdeen I received several questions regarding wildlife biology as it pertains to the muskox. This paper is not an attempt to answer such questions as I feel it would detract from the local messages, but instead it is an analysis of the content and process of sometimes conflicting views of "the land" as they are represented through speech, and it is an observation about the cross-cultural implications of experimentation with wildlife

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[62]The following story and the implications of it have appeared in Wishart (2004). I have maintained the text as a whole with exception of a few paragraphs that I deleted because they were repetitive.

[63] For example, Feit (1988, 1991), Freeman (1985), Ingold (1988), Scott (1979, 1988), Scott and Feit (1992).

[64] For example, Brody (1981), Brightman (1993), Fienup-Riordan (1994), Ridington (1990), Tanner (1979).

management. However, in response to a few questions I received regarding the history of the transplantation of muskoxen into the area where Teetl'it Gwich'in hunt and trap, I have included a brief summary of this fascinating story of wildlife management.

The Situation:

In late April of 2000 four Teetl'it Gwich'in men from the community of Fort McPherson, NWT drove south along the Dempster Highway into the Richardson Mountains in search of caribou. This spring hunt for caribou was late, and was brought on by the fact that the Porcupine Caribou Herd had failed to migrate through Teetl'it Gwich'in country that spring. Freezers within the town were now bare of meat from the fall and winter hunts and there was a certain air of desperation about this particular hunt. The men were prepared to travel quite far (about six hundred kilometres) in search of caribou. About thirty kilometres after the men passed the point where the highway enters the Yukon, they saw an animal walking across the tundra and they hoped it was a caribou or at least a moose that was "not too poor" after having made it through the winter. What they discovered was that it was lone, young, male muskox. The elder amongst them promptly shot it and the others butchered it in rapid order. They continued to travel south and they did eventually encounter three caribou about four hundred kilometres from Fort McPherson that they also killed and butchered. Upon their return trip home they ran into an officer (who is a member of the Vuntut Gwich'in from Old Crow, Yukon) of the Department of Yukon Renewable Resources who was stopping and checking all the vehicles on the road because she had evidence that someone had killed a muskox.

The elder immediately admitted that he had shot the muskox and explained that he was bringing it home to help feed his family and his community. The elder believed

that he was well within his rights to do so according to the harvesting regulations that divide the legal landscape of the Gwich'in Nation.

In the Yukon, the Vuntut Gwich'in have a final agreement with Canada which was signed in 1995 and sets aside lands for their traditional uses and for protection by the Vuntut Gwich'in. Any other member from a First Nation must get written permission to harvest renewable resources from these lands. However, overlaps exist with the Teetl'it Gwich'in to the east who have always maintained traditional trapping and hunting areas within parts of the Yukon.

In the Northwest Territories a final agreement also exists and the Gwich'in residing in the four communities of Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtshik, Aklavik, and Inuvik have the right to harvest for subsistence anywhere within the Gwich'in Settlement Area. In addition the Teetl'it Gwich'in have the right to harvest for subsistence within either the primary or secondary use areas of the Yukon[65] according to the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, signed April 22, 1992 (Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement 1992, Appendix C: 48). As with the case of spring waterfowl hunting, all of these rights do not supersede regulations as they pertain to protected species.

The elder in question was well within the secondary use area, and while he and his contemporaries think and speak of that land differently from the legal description, as being part of Teetl'it Gwich'in "country," he was correct from the point of view that he had the right to hunt within that area and he was unaware that muskoxen were in any way protected or should be for reasons which will become clear later. He and his hunting

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[65] Porcupine Caribou are the exception to these rules as any member of a First Nation represented on the Porcupine Caribou Management Board has the right to hunt Porcupine Caribou anywhere within their Canadian range.

party tried to argue this point, but the wildlife officer disagreed and did her job, confiscating the meat and taking down the personal information about the elder so that her department could later charge him—should they decide to do so—with the unlawful harvesting of an animal classified as specially protected wildlife.

Two months later the officer's supervisor drove into the elder's wife's fishcamp located at the place where the Dempster Highway crosses the Peel River (a place locally referred to as Eight Miles) looking for the elder in order to return the confiscated meat. His department apparently decided that there was more to gain through a friendly message about the importance of preserving the muskox than there was in a long, drawn-out legal conflict. According to regulations that govern cases where charges are not pressed he was obliged to return the evidence. He also came well prepared to speak to anyone that would listen about the regulations concerning the management of muskoxen.

Needless to say, I believe they made the right decision concerning the method of getting the message across, but what I think is really interesting is the actual message and the implications of it. The preceding story brings forth many issues regarding contemporary life for First Nations people in Canada. But what I would like to focus on here is how there are two distinct views of the land and the animals being played upon by the proceeding story, that of the Gwich'in elder and that of the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources. I believe I have been lucky to be privy to both of these views, the former by living with this elder and hearing him talk about the situation as he goes about his life on the land and the later because it was I that agreed to take this officer to see the elder in order to talk to him and return his meat.

During the brief time I spent with this officer, he told me about how people in the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources were extremely upset about the shooting of one of the "specially protected" muskoxen that live on the North Slope. He explained that these animals are the descendants of a small group of muskoxen that were brought to the area by biologists as an experiment in attempting to reintroduce a vanished species. He further explained that sometime in the past muskox were living on the North Slope and probably the tundra covered areas of the mountains, and it was decided by biologists and renewable resource officials of the time to take animals from areas where they are considered to be plentiful and set up a population of protected animals. The reason for doing this, and the continued protection of this group of transplanted animals is politically complex but he mentioned a couple of times how part of its justification is based on tourism. It was explained to me that tourists driving along the highways expected to see an abundance of arctic animals and many were complaining that after driving all the way to the arctic and not seeing a thing that they were better off going to one of the national parks in Canada where many large animals can be seen right on the highway.

The fact that these tourists come to the area in the wrong season to see such things as caribou and moose or that they look in the wrong places at the wrong time of day is of little importance. What is important is that they be given the opportunity to see as many large, typically arctic animals as possible and muskoxen are quintessential arctic animals that do not migrate as regularly as caribou and they do not hide in the brush that grows around the lakes like the moose. They like open tundra where they can be easily observed and they tend not to flee which allows for good opportunities for amateur

wildlife photography. What it comes down to, the wildlife officer reported to me is that the country is already spectacular but the tourists need to be able to do some wildlife viewing in a situation that fulfills their expectations of pristine wilderness.

What this officer reported to me is a simplified version of his department's stance concerning the history and place of muskoxen in particular and wildlife in general. A brief history of the Yukon muskoxen is necessary at this point in order to aid in the analysis of the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources. There is physical as well as historical evidence that muskoxen were indigenous to the entire coastal plain of Alaska and the Yukon. Approximately one hundred and fifty years ago these animals completely disappeared as a result of over-harvesting by whalers and commercial hunters (yourYukon, column#89:1). Any muskox that now lives at least part of its life in the Yukon is the descendant of a population of thirty-four muskoxen taken from Greenland in 1930 and relocated to Fairbanks, Alaska. The original reasons for this transplant were: "(i) to aid in conserving of a species threatened with extinction, (ii) for contemplated experiments in re-establishing the muskox as a native animal in Alaska, and (iii) for experimentation with a view to their domestication" (Smith 1989a: A23).

During subsequent years, these muskoxen were released on Nunivak Island, Alaska where they increased their population to 750 animals by 1968 (Smith 1994:2). In 1969 and 1970 a total of sixty-four (Reynolds 1989:A26) of these Nunivak Island muskoxen were then transplanted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game with assistance from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to the Alaska mainland near Barter Island on the north coastal plain (Pederson, Heynes and Wolfe 1991:7). These original fifty-four animals have since increased their numbers to an estimated 1998

population of seven hundred. In 1984 the first female muskox was observed in the Yukon and an approximate 150 of these North Slope Alaskan muskoxen have now established themselves within Canada. Currently there is a population growth of ten to fifteen percent per year although there has been a recent drop in the population over the last two years (Wildlife Management Advisory Council 2001:1); similar declines were observed in Alaska after an initial population growth and prior to a continual growth in the overall population (Reynolds 1989:A28).

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game considers "the return of muskoxen to Alaska [to be] an important success story in wildlife conservation" (Smith 1994:2) as the original population of thirty-four animals from Greenland have thrived and through transplantation and natural dispersion have claimed many new areas and grown to a population of 2 200 "free-ranging animals" (ibid). It is hoped by this department that the population continues to grow and that they continue to spread to new areas because of the potential value to Alaskans from sport-hunting fees, meat, wool, and because "this hardy survivor of the ice ages is an important attraction to tourists, photographers, researchers, and students of wildlife" (ibid: 2-3).

In the Yukon, muskox are considered to be a "Specially Protected Wildlife Species" by the Yukon Wildlife Act (1981), one of three mechanisms[66] for determining species "at risk." The Yukon Wildlife Act, as one of its mandates, serves to identify species that are at risk in the Yukon but not elsewhere; the muskox fits into this category. (Yukon Department of Renewable Resources 2001a: 1). Why muskoxen are now moving into the mountainous regions (such as that where the Teetl'it Gwich'in hunt caribou) is

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[66] The other two mechanisms are the Committee on the Status of endangered Species in Canada (COSEWIC) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

currently being researched and a "scientific" explanation is apparently forthcoming. However it should be noted that Peter Lent (1999:71) in his exhaustive search of available materials on the archaeology and the ethnohistory of muskox use in the circumpolar north, argues that the only Athapaskans to regularly hunt muskoxen in the past were the Chipewyans. Some evidence exists that "Chandalar Kutchin" would occasionally run into muskox in the northern foothills of the Brooks Range, close to the arctic plains but no mention is ever made of the more eastern Gwich'in (like the Teetl'it Gwich'in) ever having hunted them. My research into the oral history of Teetl'it Gwich'in has also found no evidence for the presence of muskoxen in these areas.

The Yukon muskoxen are thus a group of animals with an international history of resource management and the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources is taking its role in ensuring a continued presence of these animals on the North Slope very seriously. The fact that the presence of animals such as muskoxen may have multiple financial benefits to the government is not lost on these regulating bodies. Just as in the quote from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game cited above, the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources pays attention to the considerable potential benefits to tourism that an icon of arctic wilderness such as that of the muskox provides.

Muskoxen viewing holds "special appeal to Firth River rafting parties and visitors to Ivvavik National Park and Herschel Island Territorial Park" (Wildlife Management Advisory Council 2001:2). Furthermore, The Yukon Department of Renewable Resources dedicates considerable resources to its "wildlife-viewing program." On its Internet site, the Department of Renewable Resources has "wildlife viewing" as one of its main search categories—presumably in response to the fact that the most frequently

asked question in their list of "FAQ" is about potential wildlife viewing. Each month this department also puts out a calendar of special events highlighting the many "wildlife viewing" opportunities that month for tourists and it is titled "Explore the wild!" (Yukon Department of Renewable Resources 2001b).

Gwich'in Human-Animal Relationships:

A common theme with much of the communication between the various renewable resource departments and the public is that of "the wild" or "wilderness." As I have already discussed the idea of "wild," "wildlife" and "wilderness" is problematic. As Michael Asch (1989) points out in his discussion of wildlife and Aboriginal Rights and as Tim Ingold (1993) points out with his analysis of globes and spheres we should be careful of the indexical qualities of the terms people choose to express ideas about the environment and to make sure that we do not miss cross-cultural differences. In much of Euro-Canadian thought "wild" refers to situations where people have not interfered some how or in some way with the equally constructed "natural order of things." Wilderness therefore is something that is put aside and looked upon from what is considered to be a non-intrusive distance, or it is something that must be tamed or conquered through a process of domestication.[67] Keith Basso (1990) and Julie Cruikshank (1990a; 1990b) through their descriptions of learning about landscapes are clear that anthropologists should be prepared to listen to the Native teachers who are willing to talk to us about their landscapes so that we may come to a better understanding of how our informants or teachers, rather than ourselves, construct the World. By allowing his teacher to instruct

[67] One should be careful to note that this has everything to do with cognition and little to do with fact. I would not like to argue that our wilderness parks are in any way "natural" other than a perception of what that term means.

him in a way that the teacher felt was appropriate, Basso was able to learn that among the Western Apache the opposition between people and nature does not gloss the landscape; but rather it is catalogued through stories of the interactions between people and the land. Thus, it is not only that anthropologists must keep their ears open but also that they must allow a good deal of latitude within their methodologies so that their teachers will tell them what they know through a process that makes sense to them.

When Gwich'in I have worked with tell stories about the land and the animals and when they refer in these stories to something as being "wild" they mean that the animals are not acting in ways which are normal or they mean that the animals are not giving themselves to hunters anymore. Either way "wild" is not considered to be positive because it signals a breakdown in the human-animal relationships. "Wilderness" is a horrific concept for Gwich'in because it refers to situations where people could no longer enter into relationships with animals and starvation and social breakdown are immanent. Therefore, distancing one's self from the land through an idea like wilderness is not considered to be beneficial at all. Instead what is considered beneficial is that one comes to understand something about the proper inter-relationships that occur on the land between animals, between animals and the land, and between animals and people on the land. It is when improper relationships are practised that wilderness is brought forth in narratives as a possible outcome of these actions (Wishart 1999).

On a couple of occasions I have heard non-First Nations people who live in the same area as the Gwich'in talk about how you almost never see Gwich'in people going out to just look at things. For example, one individual said, "When the caribou come, you almost never see Gwich'in going out of their way in order to look down upon a valley

full of caribou for the pure joy of seeing something like that." While this is a massive overstatement, there is a good reason for a seemingly lack of interest in what is considered to be wildlife viewing.[68] Gwich'in consider any action such as going out to stare at caribou as they go about living their lives as being a possible intrusion into their country. Any intrusion has the capacity to "bother" these animals and cause them to become wild. When people and animals meet, it is considered to be a sign that "God" has destined this moment so that animals can give themselves to the Gwich'in in order that they can survive. Therefore many other interactions between animals and people are seen as problematic and potentially dangerous or polluting. This respect for living spaces also occurs in reverse. When an animal wanders into a camp it becomes something that pollutes or puts people into danger. These are two different worlds that should be kept separate out of a respect that is deemed to be mutual.[69] People are given animals for their benefit and to intrude on animals' worlds by going out and bothering them for the purpose of fulfilling an aesthetic desire that conforms to a foreign logic could be a potentially dangerous habit.

Caribou, like all other animals, are considered to be sentient by Gwich'in. Probably the first thing one comes to realise when working with Gwich'in elders is that caribou are talked about as being animals who consciously choose their country more than any other. In other words, one comes upon many situations where caribou are talked

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[68] This is not to say that Gwich'in do not take great pleasure in seeing animals as they go about their lives on the land. For instance, I often hear elders talk about how in the spring when the geese come back the country looks "just nice" because they are so happy the waterfowl have returned.

[69] Domestic dogs have been the subject of a few interesting studies in relation to Native peoples cosmologies. Among the Gwich'in, dogs are respected for their abilities such as pulling sleighs and as early warning systems for bear attacks but they are still considered to be dirty animals because they live within the confines of human society. For example, children's table scraps are never given to dogs out of the belief that the children will become sick and never develop properly.

about as avoiding places because they are being "bothered" there by some sort of improper action or memory of improper actions. An example of the Gwich'in idea of caribou changing their ways in relation to things which are bothering them was told to me one day when an elder asked me to help him get water at James Creek. James Creek is in the mountains and it is about a forty-minute drive away from Fort McPherson, on the edge of the area where caribou often winter. While we drove along the highway further up into the mountains, he began to talk about when and where the caribou can usually be found. He pointed out areas in the mountains where he had successfully hunted in the past and told stories about the hunts. At one point along the road a long valley can be seen in the distance. At this point the elder pointed to the valley and said:

> You know those animals are funny sometimes, they know things and can change because of us. See that valley there, the one in the distance. They say there used to be lots of caribou there every year. You could go there and they would be just stacked up in there. One winter a guy went into that valley and disappeared, he died in there. Nobody ever found him, but since then caribou avoid that place. They know that something is wrong there.

While the elder would not explain why the disappearance of this man long ago should bother caribou, there is an implicit understanding that the two worlds of people and caribou are separate but are also inter-linked and mutually sustaining. Thus when a break down occurred in the way that people should act, the caribou responded in a negative way. People worry about any possible intrusions because caribou are so significant in relation to who they are. For instance, one of the ways that I have heard Teetl'it Gwich'in describe themselves in relation to other people is that they are "caribou eaters." This self description not only points out that their main source of food during the cold months of

the year is caribou meat,[70] but it also makes a statement about the cultural significance of a group of animals which continue to come back to them because the people are living in an appropriate manner.

When wildlife biologists explain their actions by describing them as experiments (as in the case of the introduction of muskoxen), elders often react negatively. The whole idea of experimentation with animals and particularly with anything that might influence caribou is considered to be gambling with extremely high stakes. The stories about the experimentation with muskox are often told side by side with stories of people being cruel towards animals, teasing them or wasting them. The outcome of these stories is either comical or disastrous but it is always negative. On one occasion after listening to a few elders tell these stories, the wife of the Elder who shot the muskox—who is herself a highly respected elder—pointed out to me that whenever any action is taken "on the land," people must think of the grandchildren and their grandchildren. She then paused and said, "when those people put the muskox there, they didn't think of how our people were going to eat." However, the concern is not just that the introduction of the muskox happened as the result of an experiment with animals, but that muskox are also thought to negatively affect caribou.

Gwich'in Understandings About the Relationship Between Caribou and Muskox:

As noted previously, the Gwich'in are extremely concerned about the availability of caribou. Caribou are not taken for granted in any way and people talk about what may be affecting them. If the caribou did not come back to Gwich'in country, or if their numbers declined rapidly, the consequences could be disastrous. "Wildness" in caribou is

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[70] From late May to mid-October fish and, to a lesser extent, waterfowl are the most heavily consumed wild source of meat.

a factor that people must deal with. When caribou begin to act unpredictably, as was the case with the spring migration of 2000 discussed at the beginning of this section, then people begin to look for factors that are bothering the caribou and causing them to act this way. And one of the concerns which people have is with the growing numbers of muskoxen[71] in the area where the caribou pass through on their migrations through the Richardson Mountains. Gwich'in believe that muskox are not meant to be in this area and they talk quite openly about how the "biologists" put them there in Gwich'in country without asking anyone or being told by anyone to do it.

Muskoxen are considered to "bother" caribou in two ways.[72] One elder described this process as the following: "Those muskox they come and eat all the caribou food, they eat it right down to the ground. Also that muskox it pees all over the place and that pee really stinks. Caribou smell that pee from a long way and they go the other way. They hate that smell and anywhere muskox go, the caribou don't go there anymore."

This elder's testimony speaks to two beliefs about caribou. First is the idea that caribou are very selective about what they eat. Certain lichens and shrubs are the preferred food of caribou and they believe that muskox will eat the caribou out of the country. Second is the idea that caribou have an extremely good sense of smell and

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[71] The Gwich'in from Fort McPherson think that the muskoxen seen from time to time have now established themselves within that area. From what I understand, biologists on the other hand seem to think that they just occasionally wander up there as evidenced by how few reported sightings there have been. However, I have heard of many other sightings by Gwich'in than are recorded in the reports I have read. While these two bodies of knowledge may seem in contradiction, in actuality there may be some convergence in Gwich'in belief about the establishment of muskoxen and the scientific literature. Gwich'in have noted that only lone bulls used to be seen in the area and that now groups can be seen. Smith (1989:1096) notes that it is young bulls that "pioneer" new habitat before acquiring harems.

[72] Some of the information that Gwich'in use to establish a case against muskox comes from their contact with Inuvialuit from Sachs Harbour where there is a muskox overpopulation problem and a depletion in caribou numbers.

anything which smells out of the ordinary will cause the caribou to avoid that area[73]. Therefore people in Fort McPherson are very concerned about what they consider to be a muskox invasion of their country and the idea that these animals were put there partly to lure tourists into situations where they will bother other animals runs counter to their own ideas about proper human-animal relationships.[74]

Discussion and Conclusion:

What I have tried to do with the preceding example is to sketch out some of the differing views of the land between the Gwich'in that I have learned from and one particular level of renewable resource management in the area. In this part of Canada, the multiple layers of wildlife management organisations and their mandates is extremely complex and I would like to note that I am not trying to vilify these organisations, they are full of very dedicated people who believe in what they are doing and some of the things they do are beneficial to Gwich'in and other First Nations and the people recognise this. However, what needs to be expressed is the confusion that surrounds the goals of these two interlinked camps.

In relation to the work I have done concerning forestry, after my first year staying with people on the land, I have focused on demonstrating how Gwich'in harvesting wood in a manner which is not only sustainable but it is linked to other hunting and "harvesting" practices and therefore has a great deal to do with what people consider to

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[73] A good number of Gwich'in hunting practices arise partially out of this observation.

[74] While the politics of "eco-tourism" is secondary to this section's theme and argument, it is interesting to note that the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources (2001b) has declared that "A hunting closure will be announced for a one week period as the [Porcupine Caribou] herd reaches the [Dempster Highway], giving an excellent opportunity for wildlife viewing. Keep your eyes open in the local media for this time announced. Look for viewing tours to welcome the caribou's return." This closure was originally introduced (at the insistence of elders) because in respect for Gwich'in tradition when the caribou first arrive people should not bother them so that the leaders of the herd will remember that it is good country to pass through or to stay in for the winter; i.e., so that they will not act as wild as they have been.

be their traditional manner of living on the land. Some of the biologists that I work with in pursuing this sustainable forestry project tend to point out that my work is not scientific and has little to do with trying to establish a system for managing timber resources. I cannot demonstrate which areas should be designated as cutting blocks and which should protected. Indeed, everything I have learned from the people I stay with runs counter to this idea of dividing up the land. The Gwich'in have already divided their country through intricate kin networks and through human-animal relationships and are already highly selective in their choices when harvesting trees or indeed anything else. It is not, as some have asserted, an unmanaged wholesale slaughter. The biologists and management officials tend to argue that they want to protect the land and do not want the north of Canada to become like the southern regions, but the idea of mapping onto this area a new landscape of use and no-use areas would in my mind run counter to their goals.

The management organisations realise that unlike in the southern parts of Canada where food, building supplies and fuel can be purchased with ease and at a reasonable cost, should the residents of Fort McPherson be forced not to hunt, trap, fish and cut trees they would have to rely on goods imported from southern areas; goods which suffer both in quality and from inflation by the time they reach the community. Therefore the residents continue to rely upon sources of these goods from the land to fulfill their needs. However, what these organisations tend to ignore, or at least downplay, is that as important as fulfilling these tangible needs is to the survival of any people, an equally important aspect is the satisfaction which comes from harvesting these goods out on the land their way. Indeed these two aspects of Gwich'in practices cannot be separated,

except in academic discourse. To the Gwich'in, hunting and staying on the land not only feeds them it is also a key aspect of what makes them Gwich'in. This aspect is obvious to all people who maintain a hunting-gathering tradition but it is one that must be continually spelled out to many other audiences. Hunting not only enriches the people's lives by bringing food to the table, it is also a key element of who they consider themselves to be in regards to their history and to the relationships they have with the animals who are co-inhabitants of the landscape described as "on the land." So when the elder shot the muskox he did it not only for the meat, he did it also because according to all the complex understandings and implications of what it means to live "on the land" in his country it was the proper thing to do and the other elders I have spoken with about this event agree and are unapologetic about doing so. To them it is just one more event in a long history of resistance.

Chapter Six
Resistance and Continuity

> Given the massive scale of [colonization] over the past four centuries, it would be no wonder if, as the conventional image portrays, aboriginal cultural patterns had been completely destroyed. Yet, they withstood the impact. One may well ask whether the life ways of Europeans and their descendants could have survived as well, if at all, under the same historical conditions. In short, given the evidence of continued autonomy, native peoples ought to be perceived not as failures, with undesirable qualities, but rather as successful survivors worthy of admiration....
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> Descendants of the colonists imagine that our ancestors discovered a New World. In fact, it would be more accurate to suggest that we discovered a new landscape in which to place our existing world. In fact, it was the indigenous peoples who had a new world to discover and to deal with upon the arrival of the Europeans.
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> [Asch 1993: 24 and footnote on 25]

These are some of the words that summarise Michael Asch's argument in Home and Native Land concerning contemporary life for members of First Nations. Key to this summary are the clashes between outside images, definitions, and the reality of their own existence which they see as having been certainly altered by the colonial experience and having to deal with new economic and political structures, but still remains continuous with what they consider to be their history.

In the chapter on economic history I presented a conversation that I had with Thomas Koe and Neil Colin. This conversation was ostensibly about how the Gwich'in made a living in the old days and was set around the activities that they consider to be fairly continuous. The conversation arose not only because of what was going on at that time of year but also because they have an argument to make about life as it still exists "on the land." One reason I included some of the photographs was to help illustrate this point, these are just a small sample of hundreds of photographs that Ara Murray and I

took over the course of our combined and my independent field seasons. Many of them were taken upon the instruction of elders. "You should get a picture of that" was often the cue for the subject matter of our photographs and, by extension, much of the information we recorded because we were told it was important. The placement of the photographs within this conversation thus illustrates not only the sorts of images that we the participants shared when conversing, but also provides a reference for continuity. Andie Palmer argues convincingly that we must pay special attention to conversations and other oral evidence as not only talk about economic activities such as hunting or fishing but as integral to the connection of those activities to a larger spectrum of cultural life:

> Specific conversations, stories, and other narratives presented here are tightly bound up in the circumstances of travel to fishing, hunting and gathering places in a specific territory and time with particular groups of family and friends. I argue here that Shuswap engagement in the traditional practices of hunting and gathering creates shared lived experiences between individuals, while recreating a known social context in which existing knowledge of the land may be effectively shared and acted upon. It is through such practices, and such shared lived experiences, that an anthropologist, engaged as both a participant and observer, can learn something of what would be important to tell back about the Stories that unfold in those circumstances. Through such experiences, a newcomer to a culture can learn to attend to the context of the words.
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> [Palmer, in press: chapter 1]

However this is not always the message one gets when first starting fieldwork in any community. Often community reaction contains a message exactly opposite to that of Asch and Palmer, i.e., that everything is gone— be it hunting activities or, indeed, culture. This has happened to me twice. Once when beginning my research in the Ojibwe/Potawatomi community of Walpole Island and again in the Gwich'in community of Fort McPherson.

When I first set out to do research in the community of Walpole Island for my Master of Arts thesis I was initially warned by a couple of people from the community that everything I was interested in either no longer existed or was very soon to become extinct. I was really dismayed at these statements not only because they seemed to be accompanied by desperation and anger but also because I had a responsibility to my research team (headed by Regna Darnell and Lisa Valentine) gathering evidence for a SSHRC grant on Native Canadian Englishes. I went to them with the message that everything was gone and I did not know what kind of contribution I could possibly make to their project. Regna Darnell said I should go back and hang out and just find out what interests me. I did so and over the next few months I ended up gathering the information I needed to form an argument about how hunting figures as a focal element around which metaphorical and narrative strategies of persistence are continually re-constructed (Wishart 1996). Like Palmer (in press) I noted rather quickly how experience was an unfolding process informed and given context by previously internalized messages— be they conversations, stories or other types of narratives. This is one of the most powerful reasons why, as I have previously mentioned, I was not inclined to see the community of Fort McPherson and the Gwich'in people from a perspective of cultural extinguishment. However, when I arrived there the initial message I received was very similar to that I received at Walpole Island.

Soon after arriving in the Gwich'in Settlement Area I had the opportunity to accompany another researcher on her rounds of the Regional Resource Councils (known as RRC's) as she proposed her work and sought acceptance. Generally speaking, the meetings were awkward but polite, with one exception. When the researcher proposed

her work to Charlie Snowshoe, then the president of the Fort McPherson RRC. We entered the band office building and were told where the office was by the secretary. The president's office is right by the rear exit and is reminiscent of a stereotypical graduate student office at the University of Alberta. There were a few shelves piled high with a mixture of papers, pamphlets, and books; the walls were bare except for a few maps and his desk was strewn with messages, notes and copies of reports. She began her pitch in the same way as she had in the past, listing her interests in "traditional ecological knowledge." At the mention of "traditional ecological knowledge" Charley stopped mid-way through sipping his tea and informed this researcher that there was no more tradition and that all of "that stuff" had died with the elders long ago. Part of this message was directed at matters of finance. He later related to me how he believed this researcher to be another of what he saw as people exploiting their knowledge for their own financial gain. However the statement of "tradition" being dead was also clear. The message hit the other researcher hard, as hard, I suspect, as when I first heard it at Walpole Island but in talking about it all I could really say was "we'll see."[75]

After I had spent the first of my field seasons (July through the end of October) living in the GSA, the message I heard was incredibly different. The last three months of my time was spent living with a family on the land and while I packed on the last day that the Dempster Highway was to remain open, some of the people I got to know while there came for a visit. From each visitor, I was sent on my way with a similar message. They would say how I was welcome to come back and that while I was "up there"[76] I should

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[75] The other researcher, having then spent time on the land is now perplexed be Snowshoe's statement.

[76] Gwich'in characteristically orient themselves not by using the cardinal directions of north and south but rather by whether the place is up or down river from them. As all the rivers in this area flow into the Mackenzie, downriver invariably means that the location is north and the reverse is true for south.

tell people that Gwich'in are still there and that they still live on the land. As Eileen Koe handed me a bag of caribou dry meat she said, "tell them about our country and we are proud of how we live."

The people there also sent me with a message that they were "fighting" for their way of being. "We are Gwich'in and we are fighting people," was one statement I heard often. When I returned in the spring of 1999, I was asked almost immediately[77] by Eileen Koe what I had told people up there about them. I stumbled for a bit trying to formulate an answer which was not too long and finally just said, "well I told them about how much I like staying here, how good you all are to me, and I told them what you said and I believed you and I told them why because of all the stuff I had learned from Thomas and you and all the other guys." "Right on," she said.

The contradictions between these two overt messages are exactly what I feel need to be explained in this chapter. On the one hand there is the statement given in an office by an individual in an official position that tradition no longer exists or is in extreme decline. On the other hand, there is the message given by people living on the land that there is continuity in the way in which people maintain and fight for their way of life. In actuality the message is not consistent even amongst individuals. Charley Snowshoe, who spoke of dead traditions in his office, changed his message dramatically while we were driving along the Dempster Highway and talking about hunting. While undertaking this

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Therefore, to their way of thinking, Edmonton is upriver from Fort McPherson. This is something that they joke about. "You guys don't know up from down," they say.

[77] We had tea, boiled caribou meat and hot bannock first and talked about my trip. Every time I arrive back this is the way it is. They figure I will be hungry for the best meat—caribou—and for Eileen's incredibly good bannock, which, of course, I am. They also want to hear about my trip because the drive takes one through the mountains, through caribou country and they always pay close attention to anything people have seen while there.

activity he spoke about places where his people have always hunted for caribou and he said that they continue this tradition today. This is a snapshot I keep in my head.

In fact, Charlie Snowshoe has sat with me many times and spoken at length about how he has taken the words of his ancestors about potential negative influences of southern capitalist adventures to heart while he sits on many different committees. For example, in the summer of 2001 Ara Murray and I were talking with him about the potential to set up a locally managed driftwood industry. What was being proposed was that driftwood, which is seasonally abundant during the spring run-off, could be collected and used to create wood chips that petroleum companies would then purchase for their drilling operations in the Delta instead of either importing them or making their own out of standing trees. Charlie Snowshoe told us that he had found it necessary to bring to the attention of those attending community meetings the fact that any decisions made about Gwich'in land and resources must necessarily be based on the understanding that social problems, changes in the community, the effects of economic opportunities etc. are strongly connected to decisions made about allowing industries to offer short term employment in resource industries. He continued on to tell us about something that another elder had told him. Charlie Snowshoe reported that this elder once told his own brother—who was thinking about going to work for an oil and gas company that was then in the area—that it is "no use to bother" going to work for this type of operation because, as he is quoted to have said, "what is that oil and gas company going to do for you?" Charlie explained that this meant that there was no real long-term opportunity involved in taking such a job and that the elder's brother would have been better off without the job, despite the temporary income. This particular elder had recently passed away and is

dearly missed for many reasons, one of which is that he lived his own life in an exemplary fashion and also because he recognized the lack of long term commitment that these jobs offered and chose to make decisions based on that realization (Wishart and Murray 2001: 22).

Later on, while we were having caribou meat and tea I asked Charley why he had said those things in his office and he said, "well you can't learn those things there, you have to come out here. I'm glad you learned that."

In a sense, the anthropological writings on the Gwich'in also follow this seemingly contradictory view of Gwich'in tradition and identity. As outlined in the chapter on the academic definition of whom the Gwich'in are, Cornelius Osgood (1970, orig. 1936) is considered to be the authoritative source on the "aboriginal" Gwich'in. Again, Osgood's main argument is that the Gwich'in were in danger of disappearing as a recognisably distinct culture and he saw his mission as an effort to collect as much information as possible from the older members of several groups of Gwich'in so that one could reconstruct, by comparing the different responses from each group, what the culture was like prior to European influence. Many of his descriptions are based on this idea of a vanishing culture; however, aside from shifts in technology and fashion, I could have written a very similar monograph based on what I encountered while living on the land with people in the very much "historic" period of 1998-2001.

Richard Slobodin (1963: 24-25) also seems to have noticed this continuity in the face of what seems like overwhelming odds and analyses the argument that "culture" vanished for the Native peoples of the Yukon and North West Territories with the arrival of the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897-1898. Having spent a total of two years living with

the Gwich'in of Fort McPherson during four field trips between the years of 1938 and 1962, Slobodin carefully documents how the technological shifts and changing travel patterns brought on by the Gold Rush did not have the stereotypical negative influences that are key to much of academic belief as represented by the likes of Steward (1955) and Service (1962) concerning culture change. Slobodin notes:

> ... the Teetl'it Kutchin were back on the Peel, strongly affected, but not, it would appear, demoralised by the experience. "The Dawson Boys", in fact, having returned to home base, remained through succeeding generations the pillars and exemplars of Kutchin ethos.
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> [Slobodin 1963: 25]

The "Dawson Boys" were those who participated in the many activities of the Gold Rush and then returned home and continued their previous practices of hunting, trapping and fishing. In actuality they probably never stopped these activities in the first place, they simply shifted their territory and took on some new tasks and used some new technologies. Slobodin argues quite effectively that the emphasis placed on these shifts is not proper in the local scheme of things: locally Gwich'in are lauded for their abilities to travel long distances and to make use of whatever they can while maintaining a continuity concerning the core "ethos" of Gwich'in life.

What is key to all of the above is an argument about Gwich'in identity involving aspects of time and space, history and place. For example, the statement made by Charlie Snowshoe about the death of tradition was constructed around the sort of research he understood to have occurred in the past and the sorts of impositions that have lead to the bureaucracy of co-management. From his chair in the office, tradition does seem to be distant especially when couched in terms arising out of wildlife management; however, the same individual when on the land talks about history and place in statements of his

and his people's identity. In the second set of statements, people living on the land are talking about continuity and the struggles that they have faced and persevered through in order to maintain their place on the land. In Osgood's ethnography is the perspective of an anthropologist trained in the Boasian tradition to record the last fragments of disappearing cultures. However by the end of his work, Osgood wonders about whether these really are a vanishing people or if his mission was improperly obsessed with the tangible elements of culture:

> It is also clear that it is the more objective elements of society which have suffered the greatest change, and that underneath the sometimes distasteful appearance of undigested borrowings lie innumerable unsuspected remnants of ancient thought which are responsible for the behaviour and point of view so alien to a European mind.
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> [Osgood 1970:174]

Slobodin is also aware of the problems of assuming too much through observations of such "objective elements" as shifts in material culture and residence patterns, and seems to argue that we should investigate the underlying "ethos" of a culture to understand what is meant locally by tradition or identity. He argues this, but I believe that he falls short of describing how such an ethos is operationalized by people when they talk about time and space through their descriptions of history and place and how these subjects are entwined in a pedagogical process which occurs when people are "on the land" and engaged in practices which they understand as being continuous with those of their ancestors.

An excellent description of learning on the land from Gwich'in elders is presented in Ara Murray's (2002) MA thesis appropriately titled Learning About the Land: Teetl'it Gwich'in Perspectives on Sustainable Resource Use. This is a rich sociolinguistic analysis using the idea of indexicality as presented in the work of Silverstein (e.g., 1992,

1996) to argue that terms such as sustainability point to diverging categories between those who use it as a biological construct and those, like the elders she learned from, who understand it as a way of discussing social sustainability:

> The term "sustainability," from the parlance of those in the forest industry, is not commensurate with any category in the vocabulary of those Gwich'in who I worked with at Eight Miles while participating in the sustainable forestry management project. As I have addressed issues in this thesis that are already well known among the Gwich'in, I have focused this thesis in anticipation of a wider audience, potentially concerned with the social and cultural dimensions of sustainable management plans, and who contribute to the formulation of such plans based on cross-cultural research.
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> [Murray 2002: 101]

As discussed in the chapter on the colonization of consciousness, very real attempts were made to "convert" Gwich'in by altering the manner in which they approached and thought about the land and the "resources" on it. One of things I have already discussed is how the missionaries would insist that wood was cut in an orderly fashion reminiscent of how it is done in Europe. I also presented a situation that occurred where a forestry biologist was complaining about the people not listening to her recommendations about where they should or should not cut wood. Thomas reacted to this by pointing out the negative affects of the spring ban on goose hunting and the current over-population problems with snow geese in the Arctic. I later told this story to the biologist and she failed to see the connection, she said, "but I was talking about trees, what do geese have to do with it, maybe the waterfowl guys would be interested in that." And herein lies one of the greatest problems: To Thomas, cuttings trees and hunting waterfowl is sustainable because it is part of the same continued tradition. To the forestry biologist, determining areas where trees should be left alone is sustainable because it relates to her tradition of ideas of pristine, but scarce areas of wilderness that need

protecting species by species. Further, the wildlife biologist does not see herself in the same historical context that the elder sees her, as the latest in a long line of people who have been coming to the region and telling them how to behave in relation to their own ideas about what proper comportment in this particular area is. To Thomas, it is all part of the same problem. Having to deal with researchers who do not understand the land as a lived place, which is all part of the same story of invasion of European landscapes unto his country. In fact, he talked to me about the problem while he was cutting some dry-wood in an area the wildlife biologist thought should be reserved. So in an attempt to link together and further explicate these two traditions, I will proceed by talking about trees as I have learned about them from the Gwich'in, who have taught me.

Are They "Forests" or Are They "Places People Stay"?: Contested Landscapes

In reference to the economic history presented in this thesis, a picture of human interactions with the forests can begun to be seen where prior to European contact and then for a few decades after, forestry activity was related directly to the day to day living patterns of the First Nations people who inhabited this area. Wood was needed for heating and a myriad of construction purposes including the construction of shelters, the building of fences and corrals for the purpose of hunting caribou. Then starting in the mid to late 1800's waves of European missionaries, traders, prospectors and trappers began to dramatically increase the pressure on the forests as they fueled their ships, built their settlements, and heated their buildings which by local standards were large and used wood inefficiently. Generally all of this was done in accordance to a European model of the landscape in an attempt to shift the wilderness into a developed industrial space. While the shift to burning fossil fuels in homes in the settlements should have lessened

the impacts, one has to also realize that the search for these fuels in the GSA has resulted in thousands of seismic cuts that criss-cross the delta. Continuous throughout this history there has been the reliance on forest products by those who stay on the land and their concerns about past misuses of the forests are directed at historical European impacts and to a new set of impacts which are arising in the present, which are also talked about with an increasing tone of urgency.

In the present and near past people have begun to notice some changes in the forest that they understand as being chaotic. As I presented in the last chapter, Gwich'in people I spoke with use the word "wild" to describe natural phenomena which they consider to be negative or detrimental to people's welfare. Thus, when people go hunting and the animals do not give of themselves they may talk about them as being wild. During my period of fieldwork I had the opportunity to listen to many concerns that people have about the present impacts on the forest. Most of the Gwich'in concerns stem from observations about climactic change. People have noticed that the weather is considerably warmer than it used to be and they certainly discuss how their elders lived during much colder times. While they may speak about how a warmer winter makes life a bit easier, they also attribute a variety of problems to this warming trend that they feel outweighs the comfort of relatively warmer winter days. Chief among these problems is the observation about the riverbanks eroding at a rapid rate. People say that it was always common to see riverbanks collapsing a little bit but nothing like today. Pointing to one place on the bank where several trees had fallen into the water, one elder said, "never used to see things like that." Another elder replied, "Look, that sun it cooks the bank." These two elders have expressed the local impression that the heat from the sun has

melted the permafrost and allowed large sections of forest to fall into the river. People also believe that the heat has dried out some sections of the forest and killed "too many" trees. While a certain number of standing dead trees is a desirable situation from a local perspective because they provide good firewood, they report that the general health of the forests is now at risk.

One parcel just south of Eight Miles is a particular source of concern. The trees here are, by local estimation, "dying" or "cooked." Forestry biologists at first believed that these trees were the product of winter kill or frostbite that occurs when the trees do not have time to harden off prior to a severe cold stretch in the weather (Wein 2000, personal communication). Several elders from the community do not accept this preliminary hypothesis. The elders have observed a spreading of the effects of this damage over the last few years. This particular problem continues to be a subject of study by the Fort McPherson Regional Resource Council and the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board with solar radiation now being thought to be a likely cause.

During the spring of 1999 I was able to record several instances of people talking about how their "country" is going wild. The weather during that spring was characterized as being poor. The ice did not break-up until late in the spring because there was not enough water to lift the ice properly off of the banks. It was also reported that the geese were acting wild (in their special use of the term, previously mentioned) and this kept people from having successful hunts. The anxiety caused by such strange fluctuations in weather and animal behaviour have people very concerned that due to improper behaviour of people somewhere, something is going drastically wrong. The fact

that the water was several feet below its normal level has people looking southwards—upriver—to seek a cause for these "wild" events.

Gwich'in have been very keen on establishing what is going wrong. They therefore welcome the help of biologists and other scientists on these matters, and they do listen very carefully to what they have to say. So one cannot say, "they are not interested," as has been expressed by some researchers who do not take into consideration the social aspect of the forest and the people's concerns.

In Gwich'in reasoning, these borderline boreal forests that are mostly above the Arctic Circle are "lived places." People refer to themselves as "staying" on the land and the physical space is divided up into different people's "country" where a degree of tenure is held not through any sort of distanced political boundary creation but through direct knowledge of it and a sense of maintaining it through generations. People talk about their "country" in ways that bridge past ancestral ties to the land with their own present practices to convey an understanding of tenure that includes activity and knowledge. Therefore someone's "country" may be figured genealogically but the acts of "staying" on it and living with it are also locally important and often talked about factors.

However forestry in the Gwich'in Settlement Area is also of interest to scholars for a variety of other reasons outside of forestry biology. Key among these, from my standpoint, is the fact that the Gwich'in residents of this area maintain close ties to the land through activities that in the past were referred to by academia as subsistence patterns.

In a brief informal survey that I did of some of the people staying on the land during the spring, summer and winter of 2000, I asked them how they came to think of where they stay as their country. For the most part the answer I got touched upon themes of knowledge and continuity. For example, Simon Snowshoe reported: "mmm, I've stayed all over but that's not my country, this is my country, this is the where I know best, you know, where I come back." However, there is also an element of genealogy in the manner in which people discuss their "country." A person's country tends to be that of their ancestors. When discussing fish camps, there is a strong element of matrilocality. For example when asked why people fish where they do answers such as "because this is my grandmother's country" or "this is my mother's" will be brought forward. Therefore in the summer time, when people are fishing this is often the message I received. In contrast, during the late fall, throughout the winter and the early spring reference is often made to "grandfather's country." What seems to confuse the issue even more is the fact that sometimes they are referring to the same general geographical area. This may in part be an artifact of the registration of trapping areas. Beginning in 1949, game wardens decided to legalize the holding of individual traditional areas in response to the pressures put on the Gwich'in and their trapping country by the influx of non-Gwich'in trappers (Black 1961: 64-65, Slobodin 1962: 82, Krech 1974: 157). I should note, however, this is not how it is explained by the people I have talked to. They describe it in far more relational terms, referring to seasonality, knowledge and the source of that knowledge. I think that in the summer, when people are fishing the respectful thing to do is to talk about the land—one's country— in relation to what one has learned about fishing and berry picking in fish camps which are "owned" by women. When seasonal activities shift

to hunting and trapping in the fall, knowing the land is invariably referenced to the elder men in one's genealogy. Furthermore, one should not make the mistake of thinking of these countries as being discrete units. They overlap in a very similar way to that which Brody (1981: 177) found among the Dunne-za. In both cases, knowledge of places is also given primary reference when discussing people's territory.

The forested "land" is comprised of the lowlands surrounding the many rivers, which run into the Mackenzie River and valleys in the highlands of the Richardson and Olgavie Mountains. The forests in the delta consist mostly spruce trees, with some localized birch and poplar stands. Willows typically border the banks of the many rivers and back channels. The highlands and the mountains are mostly tundra with some stunted spruce and birch trees growing in the valleys, and some larger spruce trees growing along some of the larger creeks.

Turning this geographical space or ecological zone into an idea about a lived place requires using some theoretical explanation from academia as it relates to shifting a perspective from seeing the area as a landscape of "wilderness" to a landscape of a "lived place," locally referred to in Gwich'in country as "the land."

For approximately the last two decades there has been a been a growing impetus in socio-cultural anthropology to investigate and theorise about how people think of "place." Feld and Basso (1996: 3-4) argue that the recent rise in studies of place in anthropology came from the interaction of anthropology with two streams of thought in cultural geography. The first stream has its origins in the modern philosophy of Martin Heidegger (1971) and his phenomenological approach to dwelling. Heidegger's idea leads to arguments about how people become rooted in a particular place, how they take

as "natural" (Casey 1996: 13) their own connections to a given space and how they load that space with meaningful details. The second stream of thought was influenced by the work of Michel Foucault (1970, 1979, 1986) on panopticism and heterotopias, built on his neo-Marxist approach to investigating the roles of power and social control in the "built environment" (Feld and Basso 1996: 4). Of course, the sub-disciplines of anthropology which concern themselves with human custom and practice have been concerned with analyzing the manner in which people categorize space to form cultured places and built environments, these multiple tangents have been described and traced by Lawrence and Low (1990). Lawrence and Low (1990: 454) argue that theorizing about place is as old as anthropology because from the start there have been evolutionary, materialist, functionalist and symbolic analyses of the built environment of particular cultures. These range from the evolutionary argument of Morgan (1881) regarding the relationship between a people's place on a social evolutionary scale and the types of houses they occupy to Mauss's (1901) far more complex arguments about the multiple functions, adaptations and symbolic meanings of Inuit dwellings. These early examples set the trend in ethnography—until very recently it was considered to be essential to describe the built environment of a given people in all ethnography, although it was often done without much thought being given to meaning (Lawrence and Low 1990: 457).

It is perfectly apt to point out, as A. Rapoport (1994:460) does, that "built environments" are purposefully created from human ideas and actions and are thus never chaotic, but it quite another task to discover what are those thoughts and actions which make a people's models logical and which inform the economic and social choices that they make.

To try to understand how people themselves understand their "places,"[78] a lexicon of terms from other disciplines has been borrowed by anthropologists to help describe these perceived spaces. Thus it is now common to hear anthropologists talking about mental maps, image schemas or, most popularly, landscapes:

> [This has] resulted in the formation of a Place and Space Group among members of the American Anthropological Association, the sponsorship of an advanced seminar of the School of American Research on "Place, Expression, and Experience" with its associated volume (Feld and Basso 1996, with contributions by five additional writers) and publications by Kari and Fall (1987), Basso (1990; 1996), Cruikshank (1990a), and Kahn (1990) are indicative of the growth of ethnographically-centered investigations of place with an attendant focus on language.
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> [Palmer 2003: chapter 1]

There has been an attending to the focus on language because the original meaning of "landscape" in English arose out of the technical language of artists to describe the actions of distanced viewers perceiving a painting. The term was then borrowed by the wider audience to describe particularly picturesque vistas that reminded them of the rural scenery in landscape paintings (Thomas 1984: 265, Green 1995, Hirsch 1995:2). Therefore, from the start, "landscape" has been involved in a complex relationship between perspective and representation. "Landscape" like "place" or "built environments" has gone on to represent something far more involved and far more cross-culturally meaningful. Many have argued that "landscape" like "nature" or "wilderness" is never a purely "natural" entity, "landscape" is always experienced by people and then described through some communicative process (Williams 1972:146-147). In other words, landscapes are cultural in their very being, as they are the result of communication which indexes these complex perspectives and are thus complex ideas which can tell us

[78] For examples see Kahn (1996), Blu (1996), Palmer (2003 forthcoming), Basso (1988, 1996), Frake (1996), Behar (1986), Rodman (1987), Bierwert (1999), and Wishart (1996).

not only a great deal about the cultures we are investigating but also about how constructed our own ideas are about the nature of the landscape and how multiple contests may arise because of the clash of between these ideas (ibid, Appadurai 1988, Rodman 1992).

Some, probably taking the argument too far, are not entirely satisfied with the term "landscape" and have tried to find other terminologies which better represent the intention of the process they are describing. For example, Gaile McGregor (1985:vii) chooses to coin a new term for "landscape" which she refers to as "langscape." McGregor feels that while "landscape" conjures a sense of truth with its overtones of a morally neutral representation, "langscape" refers more accurately to the process. I do not think it necessary to coin new terms for this particular process, and may indeed be dangerous,[79] as long as one is clear about what they are referring to. In fact terms like "landscape" are good precisely because they are open-ended and made so by inquiry. Instead of going to the field overly burdened with set categories, then returning with an analysis which is not only unrecognizable to people concerned but is also not valued by them, one can explore "landscapes" and return with locally meaningful categories such as "country" or "on the land" which can then be used alongside locally meaningful terms to communicate situations which are understandable to local people as well as academia. For example, in analyzing differing forms of land tenure, Ingold argues:

> ... we have to stop thinking about the land in excessively two-dimensional terms, as surface area. Regarded as a generalized, creative potential, land may just as well be condensed within particular locales, or distributed

[79] Michael Asch has indicated to me (2000, personal communication) that some of these arguments have the capability of undermining good work on Aboriginal rights. If the argument is taken to be that landscapes are purely cognitive then they may lose their saliency as describing very real, on the ground activities that are important both economically and politically. It is keeping this in mind that I wish to describe some of the forestry activities of Gwich'in in this chapter.

> along particular paths. That is to say, it remains embodied in the properties of the landscape.
>
> [Ingold 1987:154]

Following a similar line of thought, Schlichtmann (1985:23) points out that representations of land (i.e., maps) have a content and an expression which need a grammar, a code, in order to be communicatively successful. This code refers to shared understandings and norms of expression. Thus what is communicated is a culturally shaped view of the world through a medium which is deemed acceptable whether it be a imposition by the powerful as described by Foucault (1970, 1979, 1986) or a contested, "multivocal" version as represented by the writings of some anthropologists working with First Nations in Canada or aboriginal peoples in other areas of the world[80] (Rodman 1987, 1992). As First Nations continue to assert their treaty rights and as co-management boards become more of the norm, the problem of poor communication between First Nations users and resource managers will continue to manifest itself. This problem has a myriad of causes but one of the most important is that quite simply management sciences and First Nations users understand the "land" very differently. Each may have the same goals, but in order to achieve them each may act in different ways as they work from very different perspectives. The selection process in discussing landscape is not random and it makes sense in relation to ideas about tradition and to the political goals of the people involved. For instance, Kwon (1993: 19) notes that the objects that make up landscapes are *open* to appropriation by cultures for the purpose of communication. In relation to First Nations people of North America, landscape studies have become increasingly popular following such academic works as Cruikshank (1990a and b), Fienup-Riordan

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[80] Which is not to say that aboriginal people are the only ones to make contest of imposed landscapes, it is just in the interest of this thesis that I focus on their struggles.

(1994), Basso (1984, 1988, 1996) and Hunn (1996). All of these works talk about locally meaningful aspects of Native people's landscapes but they also make an argument about the process by which people come to learn these things as I have documented in the introduction to this thesis.

When first arriving in the field to learn about practices (such as forestry) that necessitate attention to local aspects of landscape, one arrives with many preconceptions and questions that may or may not be appropriate. The process by which anthropologists come to learn how to ask questions in a locally meaningful manner is a long and often frustrating one (Briggs 1986: ix). For example, when I first began to do field work with Gwich'in elders one of the things I was asked to investigate was what areas are subject to "harvest." Thomas Koe answered this question best when we were hunting moose around the junction of the Peel and Mackenzie Rivers. We were walking through the bush, and stumps could be seen here and there. Evidence of human occupation is very important to the Gwich'in and it something that is often acknowledged. So this elder, after a long period of being silent when stalking through the woods, finally pointed to an old stump and proclaimed, "Rob, look here, everywhere you go in the bush, peoples have cut trees." I had asked him the question about where people cut wood a month earlier and he never responded to my question until this point. I had already come to the conclusion that people do not really have a set area where they cut trees and they practice a strategy of cutting wood where they are currently "staying." These stumps can therefore be read as occupation rather than as a disassociated event from where people live. This one statement given in the context of a history of unanswered questions crystallized how presumptuous I had been.

More Presumptions and Getting Things Right; Local Practices, Activities and Selection Processes:

Gwich'in concepts of "land" and "country" are ones in which people are involved. A desirable landscape from their perspective does not include notions of pristine wilderness; it is instead a landscape where people are incorporated into the activities. This is not a new observation and many anthropologists have spent considerable words describing just how First Nation's people incorporate themselves into "ideal" relationships with animals and the land often referring to it as a "holy" practice (Brightman 1993: 123). Unlike the specialized practice of timber cutting in a cash-based Western economy, forestry practices, in Gwich'in country occur often as part of, or in concert with, other activities on the land. For example, it was during a moose hunt that Thomas decided to give me a lesson about forestry practices. The best way to find such things is to live on the land while people are doing things and to help them as best as one can during these tasks. What follows then are observations and lessons I made and learned while doing just as I have described.

The way that the elders I had contact with look at trees and judge them as being of a particular use or not was one of the earliest observations I had about how forestry was related to other activities. For example, on one of the first occasions I was with Thomas and Eileen in the bush setting rabbit snares. Some trees they passed by without comment and others they walked up to and commented on how they were good timber. One tree in particular was large and had fallen over during the winter was talked about as being good "dry wood," "good for the stove, good to pack" said Thomas. What he meant was that it was a good sized tree which was naturally dry and was close to the water so it would be easy to get out by boat in the form of five to twelve foot logs called "sticks" which could

later be cut into one foot lengths and split for firewood. This dead wood referred to locally as "dry wood" is harvested from trees which are either standing dead due to unknown causes, standing dead due to human influence, fallen due to unknown causes or felled by human hands for later use. Such wood is preferred for heating fuel. As one elder points out, really dry wood is good to get the fire going "good, really hot" and then a "half green" piece is good for at night because it lasts a long time and gives a good even heat. Another stump was of interest because it had been de-barked prior to being felled as was evident from the bark missing from the few inches of stump immediately below the point of cutting. Earlier that day we had talked about the old practice of building shelters and smoke houses from the bark of spruce trees. The method was to find a few large spruce trees that were then etched by an ax around the base and again around the trunk about six feet up the tree. A straight cut was then made perpendicular to the first two parallel cuts and the bark was then carefully pried and peeled from the tree until a sheet of bark about three feet wide and six feet long was removed. If the tree was felled while still alive another sheet could be taken from the same tree; however, the practice of leaving the tree standing was far more common and the reach of the person was then a factor in how much bark could be removed. In addition, it should be noted that trees were selected for being relatively free of bark defects for this first six feet and the possibility of numerous knots and small, dry branches increases as one proceeds up the trunk. According to the elders I talked to, the harvesting of bark in this manner was almost always done in the spring when the sap in the spruce trees is running. At that time, the bark can be peeled from the tree easily and is malleable enough to flatten into sheets without cracking. Sheets were then fastened to a frame made out of dry spruce poles cut

from small straight trees. Examples of smoke houses built in this manner can still be found at some fish camps along the rivers. I was told that often the bark was harvested and then the tree was left to cure and was harvested later for other "dry wood" uses. I assumed that this stump that we were looking at had been just such a tree. Eileen pointed out that the tree may have been cut for such a reason but it may not have been. Neither Thomas nor Eileen were going to come to a conclusion about what use a tree had been put to unless it was put to a use by their hands. I would come to learn that bark still gets peeled from trees today but there are many reasons why this may be done. The most common reason is to kill a good tree without putting the bark to any other use. The logs may be used for building materials for a cabin, or it may be that the wood is needed for burning later on, or it may be for a variety of other reasons and the evidence left behind is the same as that of the practice of peeling bark for the purpose of building a smoke house. In fact, the practice of building smoke houses from bark is fairly rare these days and usually only occurs when people want to preserve an image of culture continuity for tourists or for children to learn about the past in a sort of a living museum type atmosphere, such as those that Neil Colin spoke about. In other words, the people who choose to build smoke houses in this way are usually those commissioned to be in charge of "culture camps," most other people use plywood or other materials to cover their smoke houses these days[81] while maintaining the practice of harvesting and making dry fish.

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[81] During the summer of 1999 a sawmill was set up at Eight Miles to shape logs for a new hotel and restaurant in the community. In squaring off these logs long slabs were made and these were spread throughout the community as building material. Many people used them to cover smoke houses. Pictures of this may be found in Murray (2002: 116, 117). In one picture it can be seen that these slabs were used for the walls of a smokehouse and spruce bark for the roof.

Another presumption that I had heard made by some biologists is that people cut wood within ten to twenty meters of the road or the river. In the summer time when the road and the water is navigable by motorized vehicles and the bush is not this is generally true; however, people usually cut more wood during the time when sleds and snowmobiles make easy work of getting good dry wood from far back in the bush. Most of the wood that is used for burning is harvested in this way according to most of the people I talked to and they only cut next to the rivers and roads during the summer when they run out of wood harvested in spring by snowmobile. This is why one often runs upon stumps along the banks of small streams and shallow lakes that are not navigable by boat but boast a copious number of big, dead standing "dry wood" trees.

One of the best experiences I had with the manner in which forestry activities are a part of living on the land came when it was time to erect a canvas tent.[82] Even canvas tents do not replace the need for timber and brush. These tents require the use of a ridgepole to span the fourteen-foot length of the roof with at least an extra foot at each end. An additional four poles of at least fourteen feet are needed for the supports. If the tent is being set up in an area with no trees to tie the guide ropes to, then about twelve more poles about six feet long must then be cut and tapered at one end so that they can be driven into the earth and the side guide ropes tied to them. These last twelve "pegs" can be cut from any relatively straight wood and generally they are cut from tall willows that grow in dense patches all along the rivers. Furthermore, these tents do not come with any sort of floor so one needs to be provided. "Brush" or soft spruce boughs are cut and woven into a warm, dry, fresh smelling floor. This flooring needs to be replaced about

[82] Large canvas tents are commonly used in the summer time at fish camps. These tents are made in the community at the "Fort McPherson Canvas Shop." These tents are also used during other times of the year when traveling out on the land.

once every two weeks. Such a tent is often equipped with a ring for a stovepipe to fit through, and firewood also needs to be obtained.

When it came time to set up a canvas tent during my first field season all of these necessary materials had to be obtained and in order to do so two Gwich'in men (John Koe and Keith Colin) my age and I traveled together to two different areas. About two kilometers down river from the ferry landing there is an entrance to a backwater that leads to a small hill on the north side of the river. I could see that there were a great number of trees growing on this hill so I understood why one would want to cut trees here but I could also see that up and down the river there were many other places where spruce trees grew in abundance and these were not on top of a precarious climb up a steep bank and then up the small hill. It seemed to me that it would be inefficient to cut wood there when I could see so many other easy places. Furthermore, we did not take the chain saw with us up the bank but we did take along a tarp, which had me initially questioning just what we were there to accomplish.

Climbing up to the top of the bank, I could now see that the woods here were rather open and, while there were a few large trees, most of the trees were either short and densely foliated—Christmas-tree like—or they were tall and spindly. Keith and John immediately set to work cutting down trees which were no higher than six feet but which sported a good supply of soft boughs while I was instructed to start using the machete to cut the brush off of the trees and to pile the brush on the blue tarp. As I hacked the limbs off I could hear John and Keith discussing the merits of some other trees. "Not tall enough," "Not straight," and "This one's good, but too green" were a few of things I heard. Finally they decided upon one tree and cut it down. When they reappeared, they

were carrying a long pole cut from a tall thin standing dead tree. I asked about the selection process and Keith informed me that the pole had to be fairly straight and not too thick because it would be too heavy. Most importantly the pole had to be dry so it would not bend under the weight of the tent, as it would if it were green. This tree was to become the ridgepole. Bundling up all the limbs I had cut off, John explained that the limbs of small trees had softer needles, denser foliage, and smelled better.

The blue tarp, now loaded to overflowing with spruce boughs, was "packed" out. Sliding and stumbling down the steep bank we finally placed the boughs and the ridgepole into the scow, and pushing out from shore we proceeded to yet another spot further down the river on the south side. Once again the bank here was high and steep but one could see even from the river that the ground was level on top and the trees were large and many. This place also had trees that were de-barked for the first six feet. Proceeding up the bank one could observe how these trees were just the front markers of lines of de-barked trees which cut through the forest a hundred meters back to a small lake. I asked about this and Keith said some other person had debarked these trees the previous spring. I asked if that person had taken the bark off to build anything and he replied that he had just done that to kill those particular trees because in his estimation they were good straight trees with a good grain. I then asked if the person had killed those trees for fire wood and Keith replied that he did not know but probably for building things and for burning. Even though these trees were clearly marked as being someone else's other people had already cut a couple of them down and we proceeded to do the same. After felling one of them, Keith said that these were "not one hundred percent." At the time I did not know what he meant by this but I proceeded to hack the limbs off with

and ax following the model of John. After, the wood was de-limbed and cut into sections. These sections which began at the base at about five feet in length and ended at the top of the tree with a section about twelve feet long. The sections now called "sticks" were hoisted onto our shoulders and "packed" to the top of the bank where they were thrown down to the shore. The sections near the base were considerably heavier than those near the top, even though they were cut into lengths to compensate for the difference in girth and hopefully in weight. The first section of each tree was left behind at the insistence of Keith who had cut up the wood because he said "its not good dry-wood, still too gummy." What I though he meant by this was that this was the section missing its bark and the sap here had congealed into "sticky-gum." However, I would later learn that the reason for leaving it was that it was still too green.

Another aspect of this field experience that was valuable is the way in which people use different technologies to harvest different trees and in different areas. When I first began to walk around the forests of the Mackenzie Delta, I often noted trees that were cut using different technologies. One biologist told me that these probably represented different time periods and that perhaps a study of which trees were cut by different technologies would demonstrate a shift in wood preference. Ax cuts are very distinctive but the difference between the cuts made by chain saws or Swede saws are harder to distinguish; however, the cuts made by chain saws are usually distinguished by the cutting of a wedge on one side and then a straight cut through the other side so the tree falls in a desired spot. With Swede saws the cuts tended to be flatter due to the human effort needed to cut through these large trees. What I assumed at that time, as did the biologist who pointed them out to me, was that these differing technologies

represented different time periods with the ax cuts being the oldest and the chain saw cuts being the youngest. What I know now is that this is an assumption, which should be approached with care, and stumps should be examined by some other means to determine the time period when they were cut.

As my experience has shown, chain saws, which are heavy and require the use of expensive gasoline and lubricants, are only used to cut down the large trees. When one needs to cut down small trees for brush or for poles, the weight of a chain saw makes it inefficient to carry up a bank. A sharp ax or machete can make fast work out of the job; I have seen trees measuring ten inches in diameter felled with a sharp ax in under two minutes without winding the wielder at all. Furthermore, when people travel and set camps for the purpose of hunting, trees need to be harvested for a variety of uses, and a chain saw is often the first item left behind due to its weight and odd shape. So when a moose, for example, is shot and a bed of willows is needed to pile the meat on to keep it clean, it is an ax or machete that is used. When that meat is being packed out and a trail needs to be cut through the bush to make this process easier it also done with these hand held tools.[83]

One of the presumptions that one must leave behind is that people treat firewood the same way everywhere. Certainly the missionaries in Aklavik wondered about why Gwich'in did not cut wood and stack it according to their model. Firewood in the areas where they were accustomed was often obtained in the green state and then stacked for a year or more to allow it to dry out. From a Gwich'in perspective this is an inefficient way

[83]I have even seen large butchering knives put to these uses when the other tools are being used by someone else.

of proceeding. One of the issues which I have heard researchers wonder about is why they often come across trees which are cut down and left behind, often ideas of "waste" are brought forward in such instances. Sometimes the tree is cut down because it is in the way but most often it is cut for future use. When trees are cut in such a manner they are usually used later but many factors can change which will require leaving a log or tree to rot in what seems like wasteful manner to forestry biologists.

During the early fall of 1998; the weather turned cold and damp. This prompted Eileen to say, "gee, I wish for good drywood, so I can cook properly." The next morning Thomas and I packed the chain saw and the ax into a boat and headed down river to the same spot where I had cut wood with John and Keith earlier in the summer.

We proceeded to walk through the woods and Thomas commented on the cuts made by other people recently. When he came upon the sections of the trees that we had left behind he told me to throw these down the bank, as they were probably good to burn now. "Looks like these were cut a few weeks ago," he said. It was at this point I said that these were the ones that we had cut earlier that summer but had left behind because they were too "gummy." Looking at a tree ten meters from the stump Thomas said, "what about that one, does it look good to you?" I replied, "ya, I guess" (an answer which seemed safe enough and did not give away the fact that I really did not have a clue how to tell the difference between one dead tree and another). "Hmm," he said and proceeded to cut it down. When the tree had fallen he began to cut into sections that were obviously much too large to carry. "No good here, still too green," he said. Cutting closer to the top he said, "good here, take these." He informed me that when a tree dies it dries more quickly at the top than at the bottom so the top was good dry wood while the bottom,

large logs would need more time to dry out and would be used at a later date by either himself or someone else if nothing happened to make the wood undesirable such as the onset of rot—a certain amount of dry rot is tolerated and is a sign that the wood will be good to burn but wet rotten wood is left behind. Thomas further explained that Keith did not mean that the log we had earlier left behind was too sticky to handle, just that it was still too green when we had first cut it.

As we walked further back into the woods, Thomas looked at each tree speculatively. When we reached the lake we turned to the west and went to a stand of spruce trees which to me looked like they had been dead too long. The bark was covered by termite holes and those made by woodpeckers. To me, this meant that they were rotten. Cutting the first one down, Thomas declared, "best dry wood I've ever cut." As he sectioned the tree I could see what he meant. The wood was dry and light in colour and when I hefted the first log onto my shoulders—a log larger than those I had previously carried—I discovered the difference in weight. After he had cut down several trees and sectioned them we packed sixteen "sticks" out and left the rest on the ground. "Tomorrow we'll come back and all we need to carry is the ax," said Thomas. This explains why one often runs into places where there are trees that have been sectioned but not cleaned. As more wood is needed you simply return to the same spot and clean the logs that you need and then pack them out. As in the cases above, a chain saw is too heavy and cumbersome to carry all the time so one does the entire cutting at one time and then packs out the wood over a period of days, weeks or months. As conditions change and as human factors direct, there will always be some of the logs and whole trees left

where they were felled. One should keep in mind that when these logs are found in the bush they usually indicate a tree that was already dead and then cut down.

In the Gwich'in perspective, hauling out wood that is in poor condition for burning purposes is wasteful. It could even be potentially dangerous if enough energy was used carrying out wood that could not be of relatively immediate heating use instead of procuring other necessities. When "green wood" is desired for stoking a fire overnight it is usually cut from trees close to the campsite, as it is exceedingly difficult to transport. Wood that is "dry" and good for burning is that way because it has dried standing up or on the ground where it was felled. People are very cognizant of the stages and degrees of this process, as can be understood from the variety of terms they use to describe desiccation. Careful planning is involved; at times it is far more efficient to peel the bark from a "good" tree and return a year or so later than it is to cut it up and haul the heavy green wood out of the bush. Thus instead of bringing the wood to a pile where it is dried, Gwich'in prefer to "store" their wood out on "the land." I write this to counter accusations of wastefulness and inefficiency leveled by those who do not understand the context of these practices.

Implications of Storing Wood on The Land:

It is apparent that people who decide that it is best to store their firewood out on the land have an idea about the forest as a lived landscape full of potential uses and human interactions. The tired cliché of "not being able to see the forest for the trees" simply does not work here.

In Teetl'it Gwich'in country any group of trees—be it a small bunch, a clump, a stand, a forest is referred to as "ehdii." Individual trees may be referred to by species and

species equivalents such as spruce— "tsvii," willow— "kaii," poplar—"toh," or birch— "at toh." It is far more usual, I have found, to hear them being spoken about in reference to their potential use such as dry wood— "troo ghaii," or wood that would be good for building a cabin—"zheh gwadachan."[84] While, Gwich'in are very careful not to presume that they can predict what other people's actions have been while out in the forest they are very interested in the signs of people's activities and comment on them often while they go about seeking out particular trees for particular purposes. They therefore consider their country not to be made out of blocks of trees which may be put to any use but instead to a environment where they interact with individual trees. In this way, hunting for trees is much like hunting for animals.

Often when I talked to Gwich'in elders about forestry activities they brought up the idea that one has to know the trees, has to know what they are good for, has to know how to use them properly, "yah, yah you got to hunt for them," said Thomas Koe one day while we were out cutting dry wood. Once we transfer from the idea of "harvesting trees," in the language of management, to the idea of "hunting for trees," we can begin to speak about what the actual process of interaction on the landscape is far more accurately and can relate it to a far more extensive literature on the interaction between people and animals in hunter-gather epistemologies and cosmologies (e.g., Brightman 1993, Fienup-Riordan 1993, Tanner 1979) which I will explore in more detail in the next chapter.

As I have previously mentioned the Gwich'in have had to deal with many intrusions into their landscape by various government and non-government agencies and much of this intrusion has been coupled with different "harvesting" methods for trees

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[84] Thanks to Bertha Francis, Thomas Koe and Elizabeth Colin for providing me with the Teetl'it Gwich'in names.

connected to a more capitalist landscape. Ara Murray (2002) has described one of the elements, the pressure put on the Gwich'in relationship to the forest through the steamships' massive appetite for wood. There were many others as well but this is probably the most extreme example. Elders talk about how the ships "burned up the delta." People are very cognizant of possibilities arising where this may happen again and with it may come a very real potential for losing the cultural element of hunting for trees with its direct connection to living on the land. Due to this concern and to the general idea that such things must be resisted, situations have arisen where these ideas of resistance and continuity get played out. When the Co-op store in Fort McPherson decided that it was time to replace the restaurant and hotel which had previously burned down, there was a great deal of consultation with elders and community members who decided that the building should be made out of logs so that "it would be really nice, just like Tl'ondih."[85] Murray explains the decision making process:

> On the day that we arrived in Fort McPherson in 1999, my first official field season, Rob Wishart and I were greeted with a hot meal of caribou meat, as Eileen Koe and her husband Thomas had been waiting for us to arrive at their fish camp at Eight Miles. Later that day when Eileen and I were waiting for the ferry in order to get into town, I noticed a large pile of big logs on the other side of the river… Eileen explained to me that they were building a new co-op store in Fort McPherson, with a restaurant, hotel and conference rooms attached. Part of this was to be built out of logs, and an outside contractor had been hired to supervise and direct the sawmill and construction of the log building. The sawmill was at Eight Miles; the building would be assembled there and then re-assembled in town later.
>
> Eileen explained to me that the Co-op committee had decided that they did not want a logging company from outside the community to come in and cut down their trees. They were especially concerned about the effects of clear cutting. Clear cutting seems to be well known as an activity that happens frequently "down south" and the effects of clear cutting are well

[85] Tl'ondih is a place of healing located about 20 miles upriver from Fort McPherson. Its main building is a very impressive log construction.

> known as they are shown on television and other media. Eileen explained to me how the logs for the Co-op building were to be collected and made it clear that clear cutting was an irresponsible practice. It was therefore more appropriate to create a system based on the existing community model. By opening the collecting of logs up to the community, the Co-op committee was taking advantage of the way that the community uses the land in the local manner. This was seen as a good alternative to clear cutting as the people who provided the logs took them from different areas, ensuring that no single area was over used.
>
> [Murray 2002: 76]

Indeed, Eileen Koe has always been very careful to think about these matters as she advises others and makes her own decisions. She is also very concerned about another factor that she talks about often and which gets discussed by many other elders as well. There is a real concern that only "negative stuff" ever gets shown to the world and this is often the truth, be it in the academic writings or in the media what gets people's attention is culture loss, disease and massive social problems. To Eileen, and many others, this is a huge problem because not only does it relegate them to a culture of poverty but also it erases all of the positive things that go on. While resistance may be thought of using negative connotations, i.e., it exists because of the injustices and racism inherent in colonialism, all of the efforts that are made on a daily basis by individuals and groups to maintain themselves as distinct from these poorly informed models are often thought about locally as positive efforts. The problem is "that nobody wants to listen to that stuff," said Eileen. Well to her, and to the others who made the decision, a building of the scale that they were proposing could not be ignored and the fact that it would be made out of logs that were hunted "on the land" makes the message ever the more clear. As Neil Colin said, "I just think it's good. For the kids and all the guys who come."

Hunting For Logs:

The process of getting logs for the Co-op was similar to when Teetl'it Gwich'in go out onto the land and hunt for logs for their own building purposes. In the past, I have referred to such purposes as "large scale building purposes" (Wishart 1999). "Scale" is a matter of perception from an outsider's category but I think that there is a Gwich'in correlate. For example, logs for building cabins are referred to as "shah gwadachan" while logs used for dry-wood are called "troo ghaii." Large-scale materials are items such as logs for building cabins while I have referred to small-scale building materials as those used for tent poles etc. To an outsider the difference may seem negligible as the cabins may seem small but to the Gwich'in there is a difference in planning and labour. Getting materials for small structures is relatively easy and can be accomplished in a day or two and the time of the year is not as important. Getting materials for larger structures requires considerable planning, effort, travel, and time.[86]

During 1999 when the new Co-op store and hotel was being constructed in Fort McPherson out of local logs people were talking about the process a great deal. These logs were all harvested upstream from Eight Miles along the Peel River and its tributaries. Individuals were allowed to bring 10 logs each to the site and were paid $100 per log. The specifications were that the logs had to be relatively straight with a diameter of 10 inches at the top and had to be at least 20 feet long. Due to the number of people involved in getting these logs and the strict specifications of the planners, people were talking about the practice of harvesting spruce trees for building logs. While many of the

[86]One of the items that fall in between these categories is spruce bark for covering fish houses. It does not require that much effort, time or travel to get but it does require considerable planning as the bark must be harvested in the spring to cover a structure which will only be used months later.

logs were harvested from trees fairly close to the construction site at Eight Miles, it seems that most of the logs came from more than twenty miles up the Peel.

The process of selecting the trees is highly involved as it requires ending up with a set of straight logs all with relatively similar dimensions. Needless to say the trees that produce these logs come from many locations. As one travels up the Peel, people point out here and there where the path from a log being hauled out of the bush is evident. Usually only one tree will be taken from one place, but at each location where I went, older cuts were evident where logs had been taken. Each project requires trees of different sizes and those that require the longest logs are also those that use the largest trees. Projects such as the Co-op and Tl'ondih use very large trees indeed, while the average cabin in the delta uses trees that are considerably smaller. Many cabins only require logs that are between fourteen and sixteen feet long with a butt diameter of 12-14 inches. These logs are easier to obtain and they are easier to handle. It is considered far more practical (both from the point of view of labour and the amount of wood one needs to heat it) to build a small cabin—say with wall dimensions of 12 x 14 x 5 ½ feet—and then at a later date extend the building by attaching another identical or smaller section to it which usually acts as the kitchen

The process by which such large buildings such as log cabins and the Co-op are constructed first requires that a suitable site for construction be found. A site needs to be determined prior to getting the raw materials because the logs must be floated downstream from their source to the building site. Therefore, building materials in this tradition are not first taken to a centralised location prior to construction, as they would be under conditions down south. As the end user of the cabin is the same person who

hunts for the trees which will go into making it, unlike in places where their may be several intermediary layers of different labourers, there is far more attention paid to where the raw materials come from. In other words, should I decide to build a house on one point of a river flowing through a southern city rather than another, the materials will still come from the same timber yard. This is not the case if one is building a log cabin on the Peel River. Therefore, there is an extra dimension of planning involved in building these cabins as first the site must be determined and then the logs need to be floated down to it. Many people I spoke to also prefer to season their logs for at least a year prior to construction. This step must also be taken into consideration when planning such a structure.

Once the location has been determined, the logs can then be hunted. The preferred method of obtaining these logs is to cut them in the spring just after break-up. In spring, the water is high and people can travel by boat up the creeks and the rivers with ease. As I mentioned in a previous section it is a great deal easier to cut and haul wood when the ground is frozen and the materials can be packed out using snowmobiles on top of the ice and the snow. The harvesting of logs for cabins cannot follow this pattern because the trees need to be de-barked. In spring the sap in the live spruce trees begins to run. At this time of year, it is easier to peel the bark off of these trees. A selected tree is first felled and then the limbs are taken off. The top of the tree is removed at the point where the desired length of the log ends, and is put aside. The topped log is then peeled with an axe. The log can be moved to the riverbank by a variety of processes. If the log is cut close enough to the bank it may just be rolled into the river. However, while people try to cut these logs as close as possible to the river or creek, good trees may only be available a

hundred metres away and the selection of good trees takes precedence over ease of moving them. A narrow, straight path may first need to be cleared between the cut site and the riverbank. Once this has been accomplished, the log can be moved using two types of power. If two or more men are present—usually a minimum of three men is present at such events but this is far from being a rule—human power can be used. Approximately two-foot sections are cut from the left over treetop. These sections are then peeled and placed across the path[87] to form a corduroy, or skid road. When I first saw this being done I thought that they were to act as rollers and they do to a certain extent but the primary reason for them is to reduce friction. The ground in most of these areas is very soft and not conducive to log rolling. The log is placed onto these cross pieces and then pushed to the bank. When these logs and cross pieces have been peeled of their bark, for a short time they are extremely slippery with the residual sap and the friction between the two lubricated surfaces is minimised. I have been told that such logs are so easy to move that a few men can run with a heavy, green log over twenty feet in length.

The second method of moving these logs that I came across is by dog power. I have been told that in the old days this was the preferred method, and I heard many stories about how people used to get logs for their cabins this way. The process is the same as above except that cross pieces are not considered to be as necessary, but were nonetheless helpful. The dogs—a minimum of four good ones— are harnessed together and then tethered to the log. When I questioned people about only four dogs being used they said that those dogs have no trouble moving a log like that because the wood is so slippery. One elder said, "four good dogs like that, they just shoot out of there. That wood

[87]Sometimes the crosses pieces are notched to aid in guiding the log down its path.

is really slippery you know, like a banana peel. It just slides right over those little mounds."

Once the logs have been gathered from up-stream locations they are put together into a make-shift raft and then floated downstream to the desired location and then they are stored until they are seasoned or when there have been enough gathered for the job. This process may take several years. Sometimes during spring run-off people get "really lucky" and good quality logs come right to them. After break-up people who are building cabins keep a sharp eye out for such logs as they float down from way up the river. During the spring of 2000 Thomas Koe was watching for such logs and he told us all to do the same. "If we get lucky one of those real red-ones from up around Mayo will come right to us," he said. In fact we ended up getting two large, straight already debarked logs this way.

The actual building of these cabins is done rather quickly if three or more men are working on it.[88] If the logs have been allowed to season they are considerably lighter than in their green state and can be manipulated without too much trouble. I saw two men and a teenage boy, using only basic tools, erect the walls for such a cabin in four days. After this the more detailed carpentry work of setting doors, windows and putting on a roof took a few more days. Of course there is also the job of clearing the site in the first place, but in my experience this is done far ahead by all involved.

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[88] This is not to say that there is no women's labour involved. Eileen Koe has been quick to point out while laughing: "goodness, those guys couldn't do that without us, how do you think they keep going like that. They don't eat air, they don't wear nothing, they don't sleep on the ground…" I have seen many times when men had plans to go and do things on the land which the women did not think to be a good idea and they stopped the action simply by not packing.

Discussion: Cabins as Signs

Each cabin is made out of logs that have a social history that ties them to Gwich'in actions on the land and, furthermore they, and the resulting cabin, are talked about as being the result of proper, positive ways of behaving while on the land. There has been a fairly recent investigation into the "social life of things" (Appadurai 1986, Strathern 1999). Much of this work has been focused on the manner in which commodities, as signs, acquire new significations as they flow through the world markets from producers to middle agencies and finally to the consumer. In the case of a log cabin in Gwich'in country the same frame of analysis is not exactly apt; however each cabin can be thought of as a constellation of activities which have occurred out on the land and as a final product of interactions with the trees which have been hunted out while people go about living "on the land." Indeed the same thing can be said of all the forest products which Gwich'in seek out: while they may be ephemeral in the sense that the evidence does not remain as long as say a cabin or a log hotel, Gwich'in are cognizant that it is all part of the same process. As signs of resistance and continuity, log structures are desirable for the simple fact that they do "stick around." In recent years many within the community of Fort McPherson have made the decision to construct new homes out of logs which have been hunted by themselves while out on the land undertaking activities they consider to be continuous with those of their ancestors and which are consistent with the local understanding of the proper way of being. Each log house, each cabin, and each large public structure made in this way can also be thought of as a positive act of resisting imposed landscapes. This resistance may not be apparent without the words of elders and

others declaring the cabins, or the new Co-Op, as being somehow proper. Webb Keane argues that among the Anakalangese of Indonesia:

> At the practical and conceptual base of authoritative actions Anakalangese insist on a simple but critical requirement: words and things must be transacted together. The requirement is a local peculiarity, but the problems it seeks to master, of weaving together and containing power, value, authority, performative efficacy, material resources, and communication, are widespread concomitants of representational practice.
> [Keane 1997: 20]

Without the "weaving together" of words and things, other people—Gwich'in included—would not be able to recognize that a cabin constructed ostensibly just to provide shelter is also a powerful sign of resistance and continuity. Not only does the cabin contradict what Gwich'in consider to be irrational "clear cutting," it also backs up their own system and provides evidence that this system exists. They also carefully reject the government housing schemes[89] talking about them as another attempt at assimilation. Through their discussions, the power of these structures as symbols becomes apparent.

When it comes to actually talking about the building of cabins, or about firewood, or anything else made out of or derived from "trees," one ends up listening to stories about personal interactions with the land. These stories often contain a message about the ethos of doing things the proper way. Harry Hoijer refers to the strong relationship of story to concepts of land or place as "spatial anchoring" (personal communication with Keith Basso, cited in Basso 1990: 107). As noted by Basso and Palmer (2003) this is a particularly apt way of thinking about a process of relating personal activities to a wider culturally specific understanding of moral or ethical interactions. Places, such as one's

[89] When talking about the choice to build one's own home out of logs people often talk about how they want to do it themselves but do not make any sort of judgment about those who, for a variety of reasons, depend on government housing or government support.

"country," or a place where people tell you they have cut trees, therefore become related to a larger system and to a larger, shared history.

Chapter Seven
Talk About Luck

In the last chapter I argued that forestry practices in Gwich'in territory are best approached with a larger understanding of positive aspects of cultural continuity and resistance. I ended the chapter by bringing forth the idea that has been used by Basso (1990) and Palmer (2003) of Harry Hoijer's understanding of the spatial anchoring of story to landscape. I did so to begin to move beyond understanding forestry as an independent activity and incorporate it into a larger set of activities on the land and a larger body of Gwich'in discourse about the land as an interactive, lived environment. In this final chapter I want to continue along these lines to present an argument about Gwich'in understandings of luck and the interactive/communicative aspect of their landscape.

Towards the end of my first field season in October 1998, Thomas Koe said something that struck me as being important, a saying that would become one of his ways of closing the discussions we would have about his life and times in his country. On this first occasion we had just finished butchering some caribou, which he had shot while hunting in the mountains. This was the culmination of about a week of hunting in the mountains during which time he told me many stories of the places he had killed caribou in the past. While we were hunting caribou, we were likewise preoccupied with seeking out and cutting drywood and on almost a daily basis. At the time, I was most interested in the hunting of caribou. I had two reports to write when I got back from my fieldwork, one on forestry activities and the other on caribou hunting. I had been asking many questions about forestry during the summer and early fall, but once caribou hunting became the

activity that we were most engaged in, I stopped asking questions about trees and started to talk about caribou. Thomas noticed this shift and joked, "what, trees aren't good for you now." The transparency of my academic concerns was a bit embarrassing but I also realized that I had much still to learn—which is always pleasant in my mind.[90] I said, "yah, I guess that's not really right. I'm just exited about the caribou coming." A few days later found us back at his cabin frying some caribou heart and some "back meat" (tenderloin), drinking tea, and eating bannock. All of this was accomplished not only because Thomas had been successful in hunting caribou, but also because we had a good supply of dry-wood to cook over. We ate the caribou meat and talked for a short while about Gwich'in names for caribou. After a time Thomas stopped and then talked about all the things we had done in the last couple of months, how we had worked with wood, how we had worked on fixing up his cabin, how we had caught lots of fish, how we had hunted for moose (unsuccessfully), how we had "a bit of luck" with snaring rabbits, and then finally how we were "lucky" to get some caribou. Then he began to talk about how all of this was like it was when he grew up, how these things were done in the past—some were done a bit differently now because of new technologies—chainsaws for cutting wood, trucks to pack caribou meat back to the cabin—but generally, that "we were lucky." And then he said what he would often return to in the future: "In my country we don't have much money, but sometimes, you know just like this, we live like millionaires."

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[90] During my last field season I was happy to hear a differing version of this statement of Thomas'. Neil Colin had come to Eileen Koe's fish camp where Ara Murray and I were staying. He asked us what we were interested in learning that season, "what you guys want to know," he said. Before we could answer Eileen said with a smile, "they want to know everything now."

I think statements such as this are indicative of how the land is incorporated into a larger discourse on the relationship between activities on the land and proper social comportment. While his idea of living like a millionaire may differ from mine, I believe that he was attempting to bridge a gap in my understanding regarding the place he feels richest. A richness born out of his life experiences on the land and living well, a relationship that is sometimes difficult to comprehend if one just focuses on one activity such as cutting trees or hunting caribou. He was careful to lead up to this statement by referencing all of the things we had done together, and then he brought the message back to a larger personal history of living on the land by telling personal stories, all of which culminated with a grand statement which I would hopefully understand as being positive. These sorts of final explanatory speeches may not be common when Gwich'in talk to one another about what is happening on the land but are common when elders tell stories to outsiders such as myself.

There have certainly been new innovations in the technologies that Gwich'in use to talk to one another and some allow them to discuss their country over great distances and these are highly valued because they allow the people to share information about their experiences on the land on a continual basis. An interesting change has come to Gwich'in country with the advent of the bush radio. Bush radios are good not only because they allow a greater degree of safety should a misfortune occur while out on the land but also because they allow the Gwich'in to talk with one another about what is occurring in different areas while out on the land. In the past, Gwich'in had to wait until the times when people would get together to share this information and while these gatherings are still highly valued for this reason; they can now share stories and other

information on a daily basis. Valentine (1995: 34-40) has demonstrated in a highly detailed manner how bush radios can be used by First Nations individuals to continue culturally important ways of communicating rather than disrupting these ways. Indeed as the title of her book suggests, communicative technology is open to people "making it their own." If one listens to the conversations which occur between people "out on the land" as they are broadcast over the medium of bush-radios, a distinctive pattern emerges. The evening and night is the most common time that people talk over these radios and sometimes the conversations go on well into the early hours of the next day. While I do not have recordings of these conversations, I took notes on some, and can paraphrase as follows. A person will call another by naming a location:

e.g.,: "Mouth of Peel, you copy,"

Someone listening at that location will respond by saying:

"Mouth of Peel, over"

Then the first caller responds by giving his or her name and present location:

"Neil, Thomas here, we're at Eight Miles."

This last bit of information is sometimes anticipated by the responder who already knows who is calling and where they are. The next exchange is usually humorous and creates a good mood for discussing the subject at hand that is usually hunting, fishing, and trapping. There are usually four or five turns in conversational exchange that concern the activities occurring in each other's "country." For example, if an exchange occurs between two people staying at Mouth of the Peel and at Eight Miles, information concerning the differences between the people/animal relationships in these places will be exchanged. I have heard people staying in the delta country of Mouth of the Peel

discuss the witnessing of signs related to the type of fish which are running, the abundance of rabbits, the movements of moose etc. I've heard individuals speaking from Eight Miles, which is the access point for people to the highland tundra, talk about whether there are any caribou up on the highway as well as any other activities that he or she has been doing. This last point is important, as discourse exchanged on the radio refers to the speaker's experience. People talk about what they have been doing and any observations they made while accomplishing these tasks. Thus, in one exchange I documented, Thomas calling from Eight Miles said:

"went up to James Creek, no caribou up that way yet, but the ptarmigan are coming together, over"

To which Neil at the Mouth of the Peel responded, "Ahh, that's good news, Old People, yah, the elders say that the caribou come when the ptarmigan come together, over."

This mention of old people is apparent in much Gwich'in talk about the land and is important as it sets up a convention for discussing a continuity of ideas and practices which extends reference from current practices to those of the ancestors. When people say, "Old people say" or "the elders say" they are invariably referring to the messages they received from elders who have long since passed away. The indexing of knowledge in this manner is key to understanding how an ethos is transmitted between generations, and speaking about observations in relation to the messages of "old people" not only anchors those observations to the past but it also allows people to make predictions about how or when things may happen without directly stating them as being their own. When a young person makes such an observation or acts in a certain manner, elders will laud them by referring to how "old people say" that is a good thing. McClellan (1975: 8-9)

points out how similar statements made by individuals from the Yukon First Nations she worked with represent a shared value system not only in the proper way to act while on the land but also in communicative practice. On one occasion I took one of Thomas' grandsons with me to fetch drinking water at James Creek, about forty-five kilometres from Eight Miles where we were staying. During the drive he told me about a time when he was in the bush with his Jiji (grandfather) in the fall time and how he stayed "really quiet" while they set up camp. Later that night the grandfather praised his grandson for being silent as it is important to do this during the fall when the moose are rutting and may react violently to any noise. Smiling proudly he said, "Jiji said that's good because old people say its dangerous to make noise during the fall, that moose, you know the bulls, they come to that noise."

Another element that gets talked about and is an element that came out in Thomas' recounting of past events is that of luck. In the last chapter I wrote about how people say that it is "lucky" when the river delivers a good quality log. Luck was also brought forward during Thomas' discourse on his place on the land. Luck is used to talk about activities on the land in very specific circumstances. Luck can be positive or negative; however when it is used in Gwich'in discourse about hunting the message is the same. Either it is a sign that all is going well because people are acting properly on the land or it is used, often alongside statements about animals turning "wild," as a marker of the breaking down of proper relationships.

Talk about hunting moose[91] is one area where luck is discussed great deal. "Running into a moose" and being able to get a quick enough shot off to kill it is

[91] Moose are not very common in Teetl'it Gwich'in country as this is right on the northern edge of the range for moose.

considered to be very "lucky" and a sign that God put the animal in that place where you are and at the right time for a reason. Gwich'in believe that to a certain extent one must be "lucky" and graced by God to run into and kill any animal. However, running into a moose, in particular, is considered as being a sign of luck as are interactions with some other rarely encountered species. For instance, porcupines are relished by Gwich'in hunters for more than their meat. When a porcupine is encountered a hunter will usually kill it by clubbing it with a stick and then make a wish as he taps it with the stick. It is considered extremely lucky to kill a porcupine and a sign that the wish (usually one for more success in hunting) will come true.

People talk about those who successfully hunt moose as being "lucky" and those who regularly kill moose are talked about as "being like that, always lucky with animals." Luck in moose hunting is therefore considered to be a sign that other animals will also grace a hunter with their presence. So, when the moose begin to "run all over the place" in the early fall, people talk at length about who has been successful and about ways to increase one's odds of being successful. Killing a moose is only part of this success, for it is one thing to shoot a moose, and another to properly distribute the meat. Killing a moose *and then* properly distributing the meat is probably the surest way to guarantee a person's luck over the next year. Treating the meat properly requires that the hunter (and usually his partner) bring the quartered moose back to the community where a female member of the household butchers it and then gives a piece to everyone (usually other women) who come to visit. The meat of a porcupine is also distributed to other people—a smaller number of them— so that the wish may come true. People talk about how when someone kills a moose "everyone gets a piece, just enough for one meal."

It is interesting to note that when one shows greed by keeping the moose in their freezer, people talk about this as a bad thing and not just as the person's preference for moose meat. It is considered to be very unlucky. The social pressure to properly distribute this meat is intense and Gwich'in will often tell stories about people who did it wrong and how this is what caused their bad luck. They may add a counterpoint to these stories by telling about the one or two white men who came to their country did it properly, and how this made them more respectable and how it brought them all closer together. The person/moose encounter is therefore a key symbol of not only proper human/animal relationships on the land, but also becomes a key element of what is considered to be a proper social ethos as well. Elders talk about how sharing is not as strong as it used to be and they are concerned that this is an element of southern society infringing on the people. Not only are they concerned that by not sharing people become socially distanced from one another and do not rely on each other as much as they used to but also that the animals and the land know what is going on and this is a dangerous situation. Just as with the story of resistance to the management of muskox, elders are also concerned that their own people could be acting better. This is not to say that there is no sharing: it still occurs regularly, and those who bring food to the community and distribute it are still talked about in glowing terms as "being traditional." Furthermore, feasts,[92] which are highly ritualised occasions for sharing, occur regularly. One dish that is considered to be important feast food is moose head soup. The heads of most of the moose killed are usually saved for this purpose.

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[92] Feasts are held at all important community events this includes weddings, funerals, certain anniversaries, the opening of community buildings or activities. Everybody is welcome to community feasts. Even strangers in the community are encouraged to participate and eat the communal food.

As I said earlier, people who are lucky with moose are considered to be lucky with other animals as well, and the timing of moose hunts is important for symbolic power. Moose are hunted up until the end of about the third week in September. From the second week until about the 21st of the month the bulls are easiest to hunt because they are entering into rut. They shed their usual shy attitude and will come to any noise they think could possibly be another moose. While after this date the bulls continue to be hunted fairly easily, their meat—like that of bull caribou—becomes unpalatable once they have begun to fight and mate.[93] This timing coincides with the time when people first begin to look for signs that the caribou are coming. Those who want good luck hunting caribou try hard to get a moose and those who do get one are considered lucky, but the luck does not end there. If the meat is shared out through the community, as is considered to be proper, everyone else participates in this lucky act and the whole society will benefit from it because at this time, more than any other, the "caribou are watching" what people do. Similarly, if things are not done properly—the way the elders say is good—then the situation becomes potentially dangerous.

I began this section with Thomas' recounting of all the things we did over my first field season. He structured his discourse to point out all the positive aspects of what had occurred. He did this not only to point out the interconnectedness of all of our activities as related to a core ethos of living on the land, but also out of a degree of relief. Not everything had gone well and people were concerned that the whole land had begun to go wild. When we first set out to hunt moose in Thomas' country near the mouth of the Peel River, I had already heard a great deal about the luck involved in finding a moose;

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[93] It is said that the meat becomes "black and really stinks." When told that southern hunting regulations only allow the hunting of moose, and usually only bulls, later in the fall, they use this as another example of regulations being out of touch with proper hunting practices.

furthermore, I had already been exposed to the social pressure one feels to participate in the redistribution of meat. It was therefore with a sense of nervousness that I set out that morning with Thomas and Eileen. I did not want to be considered "unlucky" should I make an error and cost Thomas a chance at getting a moose. Truth be told we never saw a moose during that trip or during any of the dozen or so other trips we made over the next three weeks. By the end of this period Thomas was beginning to talk about how we were unlucky to not even see a moose after hunting so long and hard.

The first time we set out to hunt all the signs looked good. The weather seemed right; the river was calm not "angry" or "hungry".[94] Once we loaded the aluminium boat with supplies, gas, tents, cooking gear, a rifle and shotgun, the bush radio, and an assortment of other useful objects, we all climbed on top of the supplies and proceeded down the Peel River. About half way into our journey we saw some geese sitting on a sandbar and Thomas slowed the boat and we attempted to get within shotgun range (a maximum of 60-70 yards) from the sleeping birds. Before we got within twice that range the geese took off. We quietly turned the boat back onto course and proceeded down river. It seemed that around every bend there were another group of geese and we continued to repeat the same process with no success. By the time we reached our camping place we were getting discouraged and hungry. We had brought enough food to live on if we could not get anything but procuring fresh meat was the main point of coming on this trip. Once we set up camp we headed out to hunt around the creeks and back channels which criss-cross all over the delta. Once again we tried to sneak up on

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[94] Teetl'it Gwich'in are very cognizant of the river's condition and often talk about it using anthropomorphic terms. During the summer of 2000 elders were talking about how the river was acting strange and Eileen Koe said that the elders used to say that the river is hungry for people when it is like that. There were two drownings later that summer.

some geese and swans and once again we left frustrated as we saw them fly away before we could get close enough to shoot. Thomas said, "these geese are too wild, there's no point in trying for them." We therefore settled on trying for some ducks in the backwaters and we came home with enough meat to last for the duration of the trip. Even though we had been successful in getting some ducks, Thomas and Eileen continued to talk about the actions of the geese. They said that in the fall the geese are usually harder to hunt than in the spring but that they were acting "too wild" to make it possible to hunt them now. They wondered why this was the case and they could not come up with any answer other than people must be "bothering" them too much. As I described in the chapter on resistance, this notion of "bothering" something speaks to the Gwich'in idea that if you do not have a reason to be intruding on something's country then it is best not to do so. The idea can then be used to explain a multitude of situations that they consider to be negative. If geese are acting strangely towards people then they have been bothered in some way by improper human actions. Thomas could not say how this was but he pointed out that these animals go all over the place (migrate) and they could be running into poor human-animal conditions anywhere. He then wondered aloud about why people in his community are getting cancer at an alarming rate, he blamed the situation on the fact that ducks and geese bring poisons down with them from the south where people do not act properly towards the land and the animals.

During the trip we had seen many fresh moose tracks on the banks of the rivers and creeks but no animals could be seen. A few times it seemed like the moose had been right there just a couple of minutes before we arrived. "These tracks still have bubbles in

them," he said.[95] Many times he left the boat to try to find the animal that had just left those tracks but with no success. The moose were just "disappearing." A couple of weeks later we returned to find that all of those tracks were still there but that there were few new ones. Thomas said that the moose had left that area because they were "bothered too much." "They are too wild," he said. This was far from a positive situation leading up to the arrival of the caribou.

The way in which the interaction between people and the landscape is communicated and constructed share common features in the telling of personal meanings of events in the context of narratives. Margaret Rodman (1992) argues that just as history can be thought of as being multivocal in its reliance on the perspectives of speaker/hearers, so it is that space can be experienced in many different ways and reported on according to those experiences in discussions of landscape. Furthermore, these two processes of communication are linked through the multidimensional properties of human expression. In other words, as Hoijer (cited in Basso 1990: 107) points out, history is anchored by features of the land that are discussed in relation to past events worth noting. By the end of my time in the field that first season, Thomas was beginning to think more positively about his country and about all the events that had gone well so he was beginning to think of us as being lucky and was starting to tell stories about all the features of our interactions which had gone really well. Indeed it is as Andie Palmer (2003) has told me "we tell stories to make sense of our lives." However, I think that there is another dimension to this process of talking about personal history which should

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[95] As moose cross rivers and channels they tend to walk straight up the riverbank. Hunters can determine how old the tracks are by the amount and condition of the water in the tracks near the edge of the water. A track that still has bubbles in it is very fresh indeed as the bubbles are created by the suction of the hoof leaving the depression in the mud.

be incorporated into the final argument about how people continue to maintain a landscape based on what was defined by outsiders as being a backward way of thinking but has remained central to not only Gwich'in resistance to capitalistic landscapes but also to what they think of cultural continuity. This final element has to do with paying attention to audience.

In devising his SPEAKING mnemonic, Dell Hymes (1974: 54) meditates on the actual meaning of (P) participants. He is forced to conclude that this category is difficult because there may be others listening who were not intended to be participants and there may be some elements that are not present but figure highly in the interlocutionary construct of the speakers message. For example, during religious ceremonies the participants are those assembled but depending upon the variety of ceremony the audience should also be thought of as containing elements such as ancestors and gods. In the last chapter I presented the idea that public log structures could be thought of as constellations of symbols of proper Gwich'in ways of relating to the land. But just who is the intended audience of these symbols. Well in order for them to be effective, the receiver of the message must have enough information for the idea to become comprehensible. For an audience of children or outsiders, this requires telling stories about where the logs came from and how they were hunted on the land. The effectiveness of the message is up for debate but when we add a new element of the audience, that of "the land" itself with all of the potential ears of the forests, the animals, the rivers and indeed God, then it becomes not only a message of cultural continuity, it *is* continuity. In other words people build them not only to send a message about what is proper but also because it is proper.

In Athapaskan and Algonquian sub-arctic hunting traditions, this idea of proper actions extends to the use of speech as well as to the more concrete elements of economic action or mode of production (Tanner 1979, Brightman 1993). It is not only that one must act appropriately but also that the words one uses have tremendous capacity to impact on the landscape and on the people.

On one occasion I heard words being used inappropriately when discussing the issue of bears. This caused some concern among the elders who were present. The situation arose when a hunter returned to Eight Miles from his cabin in the delta. When he got to his cabin he had found that a bear had ripped open the sidewall and gained entrance. It then proceeded to destroy everything within the cabin before ripping open a second wall to leave. He came back from repairing and cleaning up his camp and reported: "That @$%* bear,[96] I'd like to suffer him." The elders became very quiet and allowed him to continue with his angry diatribe against this particular animal. Later they began to talk about all the dangers that such acts have. Not only was he planning "cruelty to animals"[97] but was openly talking about it while on the land. Bears are thought particularly capable of hearing people's words and while it is considered bad luck to speak badly about them anyplace, anytime, it is particularly dangerous to do so while on the land hunting. Then the mood was changed by the introduction of humorous stories of people running into bad luck both socially and while out on the land hunting because of things they had done on the land. Humour is often used in these circumstances to give instruction about potential problems and is preferred over talking about disastrous results

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[96] I use these symbols not because I am shy of the word but because on the advice from elders I don't want to repeat it.

[97] This is often used to scold children when they act inappropriately towards animals. Elders will often say how the child will pay for his cruelty by having no luck when he grows up unless he changes his ways and starts to act with respect.

of such actions. Telling funny stories not only serves to instruct but also does so in a more appropriate manner because disastrous stories contain things that people do not really like to talk about because they may come back and ruin the luck. Again what is important is that to Gwich'in not only are the actions on the land of import but also so are one's thoughts and words and those of others.

So when elders tell stories of their own volition, good positive stories about their own history on the land and about all of the good things that Gwich'in have done to continue their practices, they do it not because they do not know about and recognize all of the negative things that have happened—and there have been many of them, everything from massive epidemics to residential schools—but they do it because this is the proper way of talking about their life. It is the same as what Julie Cruikshank (1990: 1) reported Angela Sidney having said: "Well, I've tried to live my life right, just like a story." To Thomas, we had persevered through some difficult times but had done many positive things as well all of which he considers to be another element in the continual process by which he and his people have and do live on the land. To him "that stuff—nothing new."

Chapter Eight
Conclusion: Lucky in Many Ways

In the introduction I explained why some scholars had told me that I would need "luck" to work with Teetl'it Gwich'in elders. Indeed, I do feel lucky to have learned from these elders; however, not in the sense those scholars meant. Their original meaning indexes an idea that Gwich'in are difficult people to work with because they are either argumentative, not forthcoming with answers to certain questions, or they ignore the policy recommendations of some outside agencies. In the last chapter I presented a totally different understanding of luck, that of Gwich'in elders who use the term "luck" to discuss positive or negative actions taking place in their country. I chose to begin and end the thesis with these two different ideas of the meaning of the same term because I feel it is indicative of the type of misunderstanding I witnessed occurring between researchers and Gwich'in elders during my fieldwork.

I have also used Thomas Koe's words "that stuff—nothing new" often throughout this thesis. I did this not only because it is a phrase that he likes to use when talking about past events and the political actions taking place today, but also because it indicates two very different and yet interlinked continuities in Gwich'in country. The first continuity is that of a misrepresentation of Gwich'in life on the land by outside agents. Gwich'in elders recall all of the various ways that they have been called and all of the ways that their social and political structures have been misunderstood, ignored, or misrepresented by the use of foreign categories. Often these were attempts to relegate the Gwich'in to a lower rung on the social evolutionary ladder, a place where they were considered to be just another part of the wilderness. The result of these poorly informed categorisations was a series of policy decisions made for the Gwich'in that conform to what Dyck (1991)

has referred to as tutelage. Many of the imposed policies have never been accepted by the Gwich'in, and they continue to resist the colonial overtones of any action that they understand as arising from the tutelage. The history of wildlife management provides an apt example of attempts to colonize the consciousness of Gwich'in by changing their relationship with the land, and I have worked to document how the Gwich'in have resisted these attempts through discursive and other social action. As Thomas points out, "that stuff—nothing new."

The Gwich'in understanding that their actions while out on the land are the same in many ways as those of their ancestors is the second continuity I have addressed. This continuity is often encountered in the speech and actions of the Gwich'in alongside of the first continuity. Many of the core elements of Gwich'in understandings of their landscape have to do with how they have maintained certain human/animal, human/land relationships. There is an underlying ethos informing how these relationships are considered as vital parts of Gwich'in social sustainability. This can be heard in the words of elders when they tell stories of their people's past (Cruikshank 1990, McClellan 1975), it can also be seen in the actions of people while out on the land doing things which can be simultaneously read as acts of resistance to colonial impositions, and as proper actions according to Gwich'in understandings of their landscape. Again, to Thomas, "that stuff—nothing new." These actions are also often the "positive things" which Eileen Koe referred to as being absent from most writings about Gwich'in.

In the end I do feel lucky having done this work; it allowed me to work with elders whose words and presence I cherish; it has allowed me to participate in their understanding of luck while out on the land; it has allowed me to learn about good things

to say and do in their country and to pay greater attention to whom or what may be listening or watching; it has allowed me to document all the good, positive things the elders told me and showed me; finally, it has allowed me to bring the two ideas about luck back together so that I might understand the meaning of continuity in Gwich'in country, an understanding which I am able to reflect upon and, referring to Thomas, answer some questions about current events in Gwich'in country by saying, "that stuff—nothing new."

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